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Teaching Beautiful Questions: Using Literature to Teach Youth Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

Shira R. Reicher
University of Pennsylvania, shira.reicher@gmail.com

A Capstone Project Submitted In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Applied Positive Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania Advisor: David Cooperrider, August 1, 2014

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Abstract

Learning to ask the right questions and being empowered to dream is essential to 21st century education. In an effort to create innovative citizens who are able to compete in our increasingly diverse and competitive world, youth can be taught how to discover and build on successful aspects of the past, dream creatively about the future, ask positive questions to design plans, and deliver action. These four components, discovering, dreaming, designing, and delivering, are the mainstays of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), a positive approach to organizational development. In recent years, AI has been increasingly utilized with youth. Teaching AI facilitates the potential to unlock youth's capacity to identify strengths, build creativity, and ask the right questions to incite action. This positive educational tool stimulates the well-being of youth through an increase in positive emotion, engagement, relationship-building, meaning, and achievement. This author's capstone suggests that AI principles can be taught to youth in order to improve innovation and well-being. Further, this capstone recommends that literature is one meaningful method to instill and teach AI principles prompting wide scale change. As a result, an AI children's picture story book is proposed to accomplish this goal.

Keywords

appreciative inquiry, positive psychology, positive literature, children's literature, questioning, positive education, well-being, strengths

Disciplines

Counselor Education | Curriculum and Social Inquiry | Educational Psychology | Elementary Education and Teaching | Other Teacher Education and Professional Development | School Psychology | Social and Philosophical Foundations of Education | Social Work | Special Education and Teaching | Student Counseling and Personnel Services

Comments

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Learning to ask the right questions and being empowered to dream is essential to 21st century education. In an effort to create innovative citizens who are able to compete in our increasingly diverse and competitive world, youth can be taught how to discover and build on successful aspects of the past, dream creatively about the future, ask positive questions to design plans, and deliver action. These four components, discovering, dreaming, designing, and delivering, are the mainstays of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), a positive approach to organizational development. In recent years, AI has been increasingly utilized with youth. Teaching AI facilitates the potential to unlock youth's capacity to identify strengths, build creativity, and ask the right questions to incite action. This positive educational tool stimulates the well-being of youth through an increase in positive emotion, engagement, relationship-building, meaning, and achievement. This author's capstone suggests that AI principles can be taught to youth in order to improve innovation and well-being. Further, this capstone recommends that literature is one meaningful method to instill and teach AI principles prompting wide scale change. As a result, an AI children's picture story book is proposed to accomplish this goal.

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Table of Contents

Teaching Beautiful Questions:

Using Literature to Teach Youth Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

"How can kids and grownups work together to change the world?" (SoulPancake, 2013). This appreciative question was asked to President Obama in an interview by nine-year-old Robby Novak, more widely known as "Kid President." Novak's question has transformational change potential; it is a question that inspires more thinking, collaboration and creativity. Learning to ask the right questions and being empowered to engage curiosity is essential to 21st century education, which emphasizes critical thinking, complex problem solving, effective communication, and creativity (Berger, 2014; Brown, Benkovitz, Muttillo, & Urban, 2010; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2008). Creating flourishing and innovative citizens to compete in our increasingly diverse and competitive world, challenges educators and parents to work together to teach youth how to discover and build on successful aspects of the past, dream creatively about the future, ask good questions to design plans, and deliver action. These four components, discovering, dreaming, designing, and delivering, are the mainstays of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), a positive approach to organizational development (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). AI has been coined "one of today's most successful change methods" (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008, n.p.). It was developed 30 years ago as a business-based strategy to improve organizational growth, creativity, and profits (Cooperrider, 1996). However, for the past 15 years, AI has been utilized within school systems to help staff create more productive learning environments and revitalize visions and missions. It is now beginning to be used with youth to empower ownership and involvement (e.g., Shuayb, Sharp, Judkins, & Hetherington, 2009; Williams, 2011).

Initial evidence suggests that AI can also improve children's creative capacities (Eowa, Ali, Mahmudb, & Baki, 2010). While much research on teaching children how to ask good questions stems from older research (e.g., Hudson-Ross, 1989), AI is a newer approach, a marriage between positive organizational scholarship and positive education. Teaching children AI has the potential to unlock our youth's capacity to identify strengths, build creativity, and ask the right questions to incite positive action. AI is a positive educational tool that stimulates the well-being of youth through an increase in positive emotion, engagement, relationship-building, meaning, and achievement (Seligman, 2011). This capstone suggests that AI principles can be taught to youth in order to improve innovation and well-being. Further, this capstone recommends that literature is a meaningful method to instill and teach AI principles in a manner to effect wide scale change. As a result, an AI children's picture story book is proposed in order to accomplish this goal.

AI Overview

The AI philosophy was developed in the early 1980's by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva (1987). AI stems from the fields of positive organizational scholarship and organizational development, and is a strength-based approach to building on past success in order to ask the right questions to transform the future. AI searches for the best in people and organizations (Cooperrider & McQuaid, 2012).

The premise of appreciative thinking is that outcomes are more innovative and abundant without a traditional focus on solving a problem. In fact, Cooperrider (1996) calls for "the end of problem solving as a mode of inquiry," but rather "methods that affirm, compel, and accelerate anticipatory learning involving larger and larger levels of

collectivity" (p. 5). Research contends that organizations spend a disproportionate amount of energy utilizing time and resources focused on problems, rather than identifying and building upon strengths (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). This is true for all organizations, including schools (Ryan, Soven, Smither, Sullivan, & VanBuskirk, 2014). The growing inclusion of AI practices and principles within school curriculum, pedagogy and consultation has the potential to drive a more progressive, strengths-based mindset, moving away from deficit-based thinking.

AI is rooted in a set of five principles that "strengthen the system's capacity to identify, anticipate and heighten positive potential" (Shuayb et al., 2009, p. 4). These five foundational principals include: 1) *The Constructionist Principle*: questions which are asked by individuals within an organization can prompt organizational change; words create worlds; 2) *The Principle of Simultaneity*: inquiry is an intervention that prompts and creates change; 3) *The Poetic Principle*: organizations have endless possibilities waiting to be tapped and individuals can choose what to change; 4) *The Anticipatory Principle*: when a collective group imagines the future, change happens; 5) *The Positive Principle*: AI requires positive affect and relationship-building and also inspires these attributes to grow (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Hammond (1996) summarizes AI principles in these ways: in every system one can identify something that works; what is focused on and understood becomes reality; reality is created in the moment (there may be multiple realities); the act of questioning imparts a positive influence on a team of individuals; individuals grow in confidence when discussing past success stories; it is important to value differences; the most successful and best parts of the past must be carried forward; the language that is used creates a reality.

While AI is based on a set of five principles, the process is often facilitated through four phases: the "4D Cycle" (Cooperrider et al., 2008) (See Appendix A). The first "D" stands for *discover.* The *discover* phase involves collaborative engagement in a dialogue to share successes and valuable moments within an organization. Strengths are revealed and relationships form and grow. The *discover* phase is followed by *dreaming*. The *dream* phase involves brainstorming to envision the possibilities of the future. Future projections and images are created and values are identified. Subsequent to the *dream* phase, participants engage in *design.* Within the *design* phase, the vision for the future is crafted. Future visions are built upon strengths, relationships and past success. Lastly, this *design* is put into action through the *deliver* phase and is sustained over time. Action steps are created and accountability for action step implementation is maintained. The process is intentionally iterative.

Often, the 4D Cycle is used to conduct an AI Summit, a multiple-day event including all stakeholders of an organization or community intended to craft a common goal for positive organizational change (Cooperrider et al., 2008). AI Summits have been conducted within governments and schools across the globe and within the United Nations (Cooperrider & McQuaid, 2012). Summits have been conducted successfully with hundreds and thousands of participants in one room. Cooperrider and McQuaid (2012) refer to the success of AI Summits as a "positive contagion," as entire organizations experience a burst of positivity when coming together to discuss the best of themselves and their organizations (p.3).

While such a large-scale intervention may not be possible in every context, using appreciative principles and questioning can be implemented daily on a smaller scale. In

addition to organizational transformation, through the use of AI principles and questioning, strengths are identified, creativity is enhanced, and relationships are bolstered, thereby fostering well-being and flourishing. For this reason, AI has been connected to the phrase "the positive psychology of sustainability" (Cooperrider & McQuaid, 2012, p.3). Not only do AI principles and questioning help organizations and individuals maintain the status quo of daily and organizational life, they encourage a life that is flourishing and thriving as a result of a focus on strengths and relationships. The practice of AI encourages and cultivates facets of well-being.

Positive Psychology (PP) Overview

While AI was developed in the 1980's prior to the formalized field of Positive Psychology (PP), AI has always been connected to PP as it enhances individual and organizational well-being. As AI aims to build on the best of the past and present while focusing on individual and organizational strengths, PP identifies optimal human and organizational functioning. The field of PP, officially founded by Martin Seligman in 1998, can be defined as "a science of positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions" which aims to improve quality of life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5). Whereas psychology "as usual" aims to correct mental illness, pathologies and malfunction, PP aims to build upon current strengths in order to increase individual and organizational well-being and success. Just as AI prompts a move away from deficit-based problem solving, PP does as well, as it emphasizes the positive aspects of life.

Since the birth of PP, researchers have identified evidence-based factors contributing to well-being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In 2011, Martin

Seligman released a model of human flourishing, the "PERMA" model, which presents five key components to well-being: positive emotions (P), engagement (E), relationships (R), life meaning (M), and achievement (A). In addition to Seligman's PERMA theory of well-being, other researchers have engaged in research to identify alternative, yet related models. Keyes, Shmotkin, and Ryff (2002) identified psychological well-being (PWB), or the individual perception of elevated self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, life purpose, and growth. More recent theories of well-being encompass much more than PWB. For example, Rath and Harter (2010) discuss a comprehensive model of well-being including five domains: career, social, financial, physical, and community well-being.

The science of well-being includes research on identified effective and valid targeted positive interventions (PIs) that target these identified domains or components (e.g., Gillham, Brunwasser, & Freres, 2008; Rashid, 2009; Seligman, Rashid, & Park, 2006; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). PIs can be defined as intentional, cognitive and behavioral strategies aimed at increasing positive thoughts, feelings and/or behaviors (Layous & Lyubomirsky, 2012). More specifically, PIs aim to impart specific desired outcomes to increase aspects that promote human flourishing (e.g., meaning, achievement, relationships). By teaching PI strategies, individuals build positive habits and a toolbox of approaches to utilize (Layous & Lyubomirsky, 2012). For example, AI is considered to be a positive organizational intervention (POI) as it employs cognitive and behavioral strategies by means of appreciative questioning or an AI Summit, in order to increase various organizational outcomes (e.g., community connectedness, relationships, teamwork, innovation).

Using interventions within schools to teach youth well-being has been identified as a necessary endeavor (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009). Gregory Park (2014), in his recent white paper, writes that "wellbeing is an untapped driver of achievement" (p.2). The paper argues that the science behind well-being must be used to leverage future success for all, and in particular, youth. The use of PI's within schools can help to combat a deficit-based mindset (Ryan et al., 2014), while infusing the science of well-being to create flourishing students and schools. This is the basic focus of Positive Education (PosEd).

Positive Education (PosEd) Overview

Seligman (2011) defines PosEd as traditional education accompanied by approaches to build well-being. PosEd "seeks to combine principles of PP with best-practice teaching and educational paradigms to promote optimal development and flourishing" (Norrish, Williams, O'Connor, & Robinson, 2013, p. 147). The application of PP principles through implicit and explicit teaching is the foundation of PosEd. Seligman et al. (2009) contend that schools are an ideal setting for the implementation of PIs, through which increased well-being and learning is amplified.

Currently, the most profound example of an embedded school-wide PosEd system takes place in Australia at the Geelong Grammar School (GGS) (Norrish et al., 2013). In 2008, the GGS, in conjunction with Dr. Martin Seligman, from the University of Pennsylvania, and other leaders in the field of scientific PP research, created the GGS model for PosEd. This model proposes that six elements of well-being: positive emotion, positive engagement, positive accomplishment, positive purpose, positive relationships, and positive health, be explicitly taught to students ("teach it"), embedded in the

curriculum ("embed it"), and exemplified by all school stakeholders ("live it) (Norrish et al., p. 151). This particular model of PosEd was improved and created over time through the use of AI Summits and AI-based positive questioning (Williams, 2011). AI Summits were utilized to better understand what makes a flourishing institution.

In addition to the all-encompassing GGS project, other programs have been developed to improve the well-being of youth on a larger scale. Multi-session school-based programs, such as the "Strath Haven Project," which builds student resiliency by exploring character strengths, have been effective in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression (Gillham, Hamilton, Freres, Patton, & Gallop, 2006). A strengths-based curriculum is essential, as research suggests that it is associated with increased intrinsic motivation and effort in secondary and post-secondary education (Louis, 2009). The Penn Resiliency Program (PRP) is another empirically-grounded PP-based intervention which increases optimism and decreases student depressive symptomology, thereby building resiliency (Reivich, Gillham, Chaplin, & Seligman, 2013). A meta-analysis of over 17 controlled evaluations, has documented that PRP impacts decreases in student depression for up to one year (Brunwasser, Gillham, & Kim, 2009).Further, research also suggests that PRP reduces hopelessness among middle school-aged youth (Gillham et al., 2012). This focus on resilience is important, given that research suggests that resilience, in turn, is correlated with higher levels of adaptability, character, coping, friendship, optimism, and lower risks for substance abuse within an adult military population (Harms, Herian, Krasikova, Vanhove, & Lester, 2013).

Along with POIs, such as the GGS project, the Strath Haven Project, and the PRP, existing research reports that empirically-grounded individual youth-based PIs have the

potential to increase positive affect and school and life satisfaction (e.g., Froh, Sefick, & Emmons, 2008). Much of the current research on school-based, youth-geared interventions encompasses gratitude (e.g., Froh, Kashdan, Ozimkowski, & Miller, 2009). These studies suggest that increased gratitude also fosters increased satisfaction with the school experience. Today, targeted interventions are focusing on improving achievement by teaching students about growth mindset, or the mindset that the brain is flexible and growing, and that new learning is always possible (Dweck, 2006). New research is underway to better understand how to teach students self-control and perseverance in order to increase well-being through achievement and goal attainment (e.g., Romer, Duckworth, Sznitman, & Park, 2010). In addition to these interventions and intervention programs, AI can also be considered to be another applied PI for youth, or a POI for schools and school systems.

AI as a Positive Intervention(PI) for Youth

Cooperrider and McQuaid (2012) connect AI to Seligman's (2011) PERMA theory of human flourishing. AI has produced documented effects of increases in flourishing throughout organizations and the individuals within them. Subsequent to AI Summits, observations of passion, motivation, positive mindsets, and innovation have been made (Cooperrider & McQuaid, 2012, p. 26). These effects are observed across businesses and governmental agencies worldwide. These various well-being outcomes are also beneficial for a youth population. The description of AI and its connections to specific elements of well-being follow.

Positive Emotion

Approximately ten percent of school-age students exhibit low positive affect (Eklund, Dowdy, Jones, & Furlong, 2011). These students experience academic difficulties and less engagement in school (Antaramian, Huebner, Hills, & Valois, 2010). Jia Ng and colleagues call for "systematic efforts" to target this population. In addition, Noddings (2003) calls for schools to prioritize happiness or positive affect, in addition to academic achievement; Park (2014) advocates for schools to focus on well-being in order to increase student achievement. This call for schools to prioritize positive affect is consistent with research suggesting that students with higher positive affect attain higher grades (Suldo, Thalji, & Ferron, 2011) and physiologically recover faster after stressful setbacks (Papousek et al., 2010). AI has the potential to increase positive affect.

The fifth AI principle is *The Positive Principle*: AI requires positive affect and relationship-building; AI also inspires relationships to grow (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Increases in positive emotion are linked to increased problem solving and creativity. Fredrickson's (2004) *Broaden and Build Theory* clearly identifies that positive emotions promote creativity, open-mindedness, problem-solving, and new resources resulting in an upward spiral of more positive emotions and forward movement. AI focuses on strengths and research asserts that when individuals know and use their strengths, more positive affect is garnered (Haidt, 2006; Louis, 2009). Research has found that using one's strengths is a predictor of well-being, lower levels of stress, and increased positive affect (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Kashdan, & Hurling, 2011). The use of strengths-based interventions can alleviate symptoms of depression (Gander, Proyer, Ruch, & Wyss,

2013). AI focuses on strengths and success. It thrives on positive questioning and inspires positive affect.

Meaning and Engagement

The second factor in Seligman's (2011) flourishing equation is engagement (E). Kahane and Rapoport (1997) emphasize that youth, in particular, search for meaning and freedom to develop a sense of identity. Research unfortunately suggests that by middle school students are less engaged and interested in learning (Wigfield, Eccles, MacIver, Reuman, & Midgley, 1991). However, the PP-based concept of flow, the ability to fully engage in an activity of interest, can be increased in school in order to improve engagement, achievement, and creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes flow as encompassing seven factors: clear goals, immediate feedback, a match of skill and activity challenge, concentration, control over the activity, a loss of self-consciousness, and a feeling of timelessness. Flow encourages effortless achievement. This "vital" engagement also leads to increased meaning (M), an essential flourishing factor (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

One strategy known to increase flow is to capitalize on signature strengths (Haidt, 2006). Unfortunately, less than one third of individuals may be aware of and understand their strengths (Linley, 2008). Students who know and can "capitalize" on their strengths access greater social support and build on past successes (Bowers & Lopez, 2010). Two current PosEd programs, the PRP and the GGS project, focus on helping students identify and build upon strengths. Through class wide lessons, both programs engage students in self-assessments and discussions to learn the language of strengths and use their strengths in the future.

Aside from a strengths-based curriculum, which can be costly and often does not fit within mainstream education, AI encourages participants to identify individual and team member strengths. Current available research suggests that AI can increase student engagement within schools and communities (e.g., Morsillo & Fisher 2007). AI can engage children in designing their own destinies while creating meaning in their lives. Using the principles of AI and the 4D Cycle, students can work together to set challenging and achievable goals to improve their own success and that of their classrooms and schools. In this way, students craft their own questions to propose a new future and future plans are designed and implemented, based on past successes made possible by individual strengths. Through the use of AI, flow is activated.

Relationships

In addition to focusing on strengths and enhancing engagement and meaning, AI builds relationships and social connectedness (Holdsworth, 2004). An emphasis on group learning and building relationships in school can help to increase student engagement and well-being outcomes. When people work together they can generate better and more creative solutions. When group work occurs within an educational setting, opportunities for the development of social skills and emotional intelligence (EI) arise. EI involves the ability to monitor and understand one's own emotions and the emotions of others in order to navigate the environment toward success (Salovey, Caruso, & Mayer, 1989). EI benefits students in the long term, including helping them create relational bonds, traverse social networks, and eventually when they are older, succeed in the competitive job market. Through the 4D Cycle, individuals engage in a process of empowerment.

Individuals and team members build social connections through the facilitation of meaning and purpose as they join together to create change (Holdsworth, 2004).

Hope

Hope is an essential principle of AI (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Hope and goal setting theories suggest that hope is fostered through the creation of specific goals (Locke, 1996; Lopez et al., 2004). Hope is the perceived competence in accomplishing goals (Lopez et al., 2004). Individuals who have hope and believe they are capable of reaching goals have a greater chance of success at goal attainment. AI facilitates hope by giving participants power over their decisions and future outcomes (Morsillo & Fisher, 2007). Through the use of AI, youth can become more hopeful, confident, and successful in achieving their goals and dreams.

Community Well-being

One prominent aspect of well-being is one's comfort level, which draws from a feeling of safety and having a connection within a community (Rath & Harter, 2010). It is essential that children feel connected to their schools and communities. AI has the capacity to engage schools in dialogues to promote positive organizational and community change (Morsillo & Fisher, 2007). Ryan et al. (2014) supports AI as a tool to change school culture and to initiate school reform. When individuals feel a connection to their communities and the earth on a larger scale, "mirror flourishing" occurs. "Mirror flourishing" is a "growing together that happens naturally and reciprocally to us when we actively help, or witness the acts, that help nature flourish, others flourish or the world as a whole flourish" (Cooperrider & McQuaid, 2012, p.27). Community well-being

increases when members join together to share stories of success and images of the future (Browne, n.d.a). These processes are embedded in the culture of AI.

Using AI to Craft Creativity

All of the above factors (e.g., positive emotion, relationships, hope, community well-being, etc.) can potentially promote an upward spiral effect of creativity and innovation. There are current curricular initiatives that aim to enhance children's creativity, such as arts integration (Gullatt, 2008). The premise of this program is that when art, theater and music are infused throughout all academic areas, it provides an atmosphere for students to transform ideas into art and create connections between content and art; however, more importantly, arts integration encourages students to "imagine possibilities that are not now, but which might become," to understand others' perspectives, and to define meaning (Gullatt, 2008, p.15). The arts integration program also has a natural built-in capacity to use students' strengths to create engaging and meaningful activities. This description of arts integration is very similar to the goal of AI, to build on strengths in order to imagine future possibilities.

Deriving creative actions and designs is a fundamental goal of AI. Not only is creativity beneficial to achievement and increased positive affect (Davis, 2009), but it is desired and required in today's job market (Brown et al., 2010; IBM, 2010; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2008). AI fosters creativity through processes within the 4D Cycle, but also through the positive appreciative questioning that is encouraged and facilitated.

Asking Good Questions

For the reasons stated above, AI is an ultimate PI and POI that has the potential to build flourishing youth and schools. One of the major mechanisms behind AI's

effectiveness as an intervention is its focus on asking appreciative questions. The latest creativity research indicates that one of the most essential factors in priming innovation is one's ability to ask a good question (Berger, 2014). Berger writes that asking "big, meaningful, beautiful questions" may be "the first steps in moving beyond old habits and behaviors as we embrace the new" (p.7). AI principles denote that the very first questions asked and the language embedded within these questions shape the future and influence individuals, groups and communities (Browne a, n.d.a). Radner (2001) believes that these "big questions" are essential ingredients to school transformation.

Research indicates that youth and adults alike need help and reminders to continue asking good questions. Humans naturally begin to ask questions when curiosity kicks in (Hudson-Ross, 1987). Preschoolers frequently ask good questions. Research performed by OnePoll on behalf of a leading online family retailer, Littlewoods.com, suggests that on average, four-year-old British girls ask 390 questions per day, with boys following closely behind (Why is Water Wet, 2013). According to the study, in which 1,000 UK mothers of children between the ages of two and ten were surveyed electronically, children ask about 23 questions per hour. Between ages four and five, children are constantly questioning. However, research suggests that when children enter formal preschool, they automatically begin to ask fewer questions, only approximately 100 questions a day (Hough, 2012; Kim, 2011). The older they get the fewer and fewer questions they ask. The frequency of children asking questions sharply declines at ages four and five and continues to decline through late teens (Berger, 2014).

At the same time of this decline, according to a 2013 Gallup Poll, student engagement also decreases (Busteed, 2013). In addition, reported flow is less frequent

(Wigfield et al., 1991). Kim (2011) found that despite an increase in IQ scores, school-age creativity has been declining. Dan Rothstein, co-director of The Right Question Institute, is cited as stating that by middle school, "the question-asking muscle atrophies" (Berger, 2014, p.66). Krajcik, Blumenfeld, Marx, Bass, and Fredricks (1998) found that middle school students display weaknesses in their ability to generate and ask questions.

As for the cause of the deterioration of school-age questioning, Bonawitz and colleagues (2011) suggest that the decline stems from too much teacher-directed learning. Berger (2014) posits that schools do not "encourage, teach" or "tolerate" questions (p.46). More focus is placed on finding the memorized, right answers. Often, when students find wrong answers, they are reprimanded. Sally Hudson-Ross (1987) stated that "schooling in our society tends to halt students' progress as questioners" (p. 110). While many educators recognize that asking good questions is critical to gaining knowledge and creativity, there are currently no courses or classes that teach this skill.

By modeling and teaching youth how to craft good questions and by providing them the freedom and support to ask questions, teachers and families can empower students to take ownership over their learning and knowledge (Hudson-Ross, 1987; Krajcik et al., 1998). Books are now being crafted to teach educators how to help students ask good questions. Rothstein and Santana (2011) recently formulated a K-12 program to teach students how to ask good questions. Within the proposed model, teachers first design a question focus, which is followed by students independently producing, listing and prioritizing their questions. Next, students and teachers work together to prioritize questions; the exercise ends with reflection. When crafting an appreciative question, the

question focus is one that is appreciative, or which examines strengths, success and future outcomes (see Appendix B for a list of AI-based question examples).

Beautiful questions are "ambitious, yet actionable" and can "begin to shift the way we perceive or think about something – and that might serve as a catalyst to bring about change" (Berger, 2014, p.8). Optimistic questions can influence more innovation. Reciprocally, Berger (2014) defines innovation as "trying to find and formulate new questions" (p. 20). Cooperrider and AI posit that asking questions which are positive and appreciative in nature can yield even better outcomes (Berger, 2014). The more questions asked, the more answers found. Berger (2014) and Cooperrider (1987) suggest that questions should begin with reflecting on past successes followed by dreaming up future possibilities. Strength-based questioning allows individuals to build on current skills, which can increase the speed and ease with which questions are answered. Questions related to meaning and purpose can inspire inquiry (Berger, 2014) and eventually, questions become more action-focused and design-driven. This focus on ongoing questioning fosters an understanding and hopeful environment filled with individuals who are not afraid of change, the kind of environment that schools strive for.

Tony Wagner, from Harvard University's Innovation Lab, and futurist, John Seely Brown, believe that now is the time for creative, flexible, resourceful, self-learners (Berger, 2014, p. 49). Wagner (2012) calls for parents and educators to create innovators to compete in today's innovation-driven market. Children must make asking good questions a habit. Some educators have been advocating for fellow educators to take detours from lessons to encourage students to formulate their own problems (e.g., Meyer, 2010). Further, parents can also serve as excellent question-asking teachers. Hal

Gregerson, author and executive director of the MIT Sloan Leadership Center, has interviewed "master questioners" and innovators. He found that at least one adult in their lives encouraged them to ask innovative and thought-provoking questions (Berger, 2014). Questions are the basis for AI, which at its core teaches that "we live in worlds our questions create" (Cooperrider & McQuaid, 2012, p.8). In teaching youth, AI is a perfect PI to facilitate the learning of how to ask innovative questions.

Research: AI Applied to Youth

While the foundation of AI was initially based upon the inquisitive and positive minds of children, as Cooperrider (1996) describes in his article, *The Child as Agent of Inquiry*, appreciative learning and inquiry continue to be in its early stages of development within schools (Doveston & Keenaghan, 2006; Eow et al. 2010). Within the past 15 years, AI has become a more utilized change management tool across schools (Doveston & Keenaghan, 2006). Preliminary research suggests that AI can transform organizations and well-being. The participatory approach of AI is valuable with all children, particularly with marginalized youth (Bostock & Freeman, 2003) and students with social, behavioral and cognitive weaknesses (Doveston & Keenaghan, 2006).

Most of AI research as applied to youth and schools represents action research. Action research engages participants in a process that examines past successes in order to inform future programming (Morsillo & Fisher, 2007). AI action researchers aim to find "peak moments" of success in order to engage stakeholders to improve community and organizational functioning (Pillar, 2014, p.5). This approach builds strength. AI action research asks participants to answer a series of strength-based questions within an interview format, rather than focusing on problem solving (see Appendix B for a list of

AI-based questions). These questions explore avenues for "positive transformations" (Morsillo & Fisher, 2007, p. 50).

Some educational systems and schools have used AI to help youth improve civic engagement. In Melbourne, Australia, youth, ages 15-16, were engaged in AI action research to build community projects as part of a class in school (Morsillo & Fisher, 2007). Youth were engaged in AI interviews led by a researcher within the school system for four hours per week over a 12 week period, in addition to two full days of school training. In total, 60 total contact hours of AI and planning occurred. Students designed and implemented multiple community-based projects. After the projects were created, youth reported an increase in engagement at school, a stronger positive identity, hopefulness, teamwork, and community connectedness.

Ryan et al. (2014) taught a group of administrators, teachers, students, parents, and alumni about the AI process in order to initiate school reform. This process was conducted in three Philadelphia area high schools. At one school, the results of 57 AI interviews were infused into a questionnaire that was distributed to an entire school community. The questionnaire addressed the school's curriculum, instruction, administration, and community connectedness. The results highlighted new information used to improve programming based upon stakeholder perceptions of strengths. The authors stated that AI is a strategy to initiate "analytical and affective" reform (p. 167). They also stated, that the AI process "reconnects teachers and administrators to their passion for teaching and to their sense of mission; for students the process enhances school pride and fosters recognition of the bonds that students have with peers and teachers alike" (p.167).

In 2001, Barbara Radner, Director of the DePaul Center for Urban Education in Chicago, reflected on the impact of AI-based programs initiated in 1995, IMAGINE CHICAGO and The Urban Imagination Network. IMAGINE CHICAGO is a non-profit organization, created by Bliss Browne in 1992, that has made a commitment to create hope and deeper connections within the community (Browne, n.d.b). Schools, churches, community groups, and cultural institutions work together to create a better future. While adults are involved in the process and program, and intergenerational teams are relied upon, youth are presented as the agents of change. During a pilot study, 50 youth interviewed adults to collect AI interviews. IMAGINE CHICAGO enlisted a three-stage, large-scale system process. The three-stages included: *Understand*: Discovering the best of what is; *Imagine*: Imagining what can be; and *Create*: Creating what will be (Browne, n.d.a). These three stages are an adaptation of the AI 4D Cycle (See Appendix A). During the first phase, *Understand*, stakeholders were taught about the history of their community and were exposed to positive-strength based stories regarding the community at its best. Following this phase, stakeholders crafted images of the future. Lastly, during the *Create* phase, stakeholders established teams and learning communities to design the future. Over 100 youth, elementary through high school ages, were involved in the IMAGINE CHICAGO interview process. Results from the program suggest that the intergenerational interviews crafted a shared community identity, held community members accountable for change, fostered hope for the city's future, and created new future possibilities based on shared hopes and values. The participation of youth increased their ownership of the community, provided a sense of empowerment to change

the city, increased community connectedness, teamwork, self-esteem and self-confidence, creativity, and an appreciation of older generations (Browne, n.d.b).

Within the larger IMAGINE CHICAGO program, The Urban Imagination Network was created. This consisted of a series of workshops and retreats for principals, parents and educators. These workshops connected stakeholders to local museum educators in order to make more of a real world connection between reading and content areas to museum resources. Participating schools created leadership team meetings through which lesson plans were designed based on workshop outcomes. An emphasis on visual outcomes of connections made between content and culture transformed the physical appearance and energy within schools. Museums transformed from a "fieldtrip" into a larger resource and sense of inspiration for educators.

Another example of AI as a POI occurred in West Springfield, Massachusetts. In 2002, 650 people, including parents, administrators, educators, members from the business community, and 100 children from grades six through 12, met over the course of two days in West Springfield for a school-system wide AI Summit (Morris, Schiller, Stavros, & Moratta, 2002). Throughout the Summit, participants focused on five topics that emerged from pre-Summit planning and interviews: "*lifelong learning, role models, learning is fun, valuing everyone and relevance of learning to real lif*e." Morris et al. (2002) indicated that stories of school system success were shared and celebrated and increased energy and enthusiasm was felt throughout the Summit.

Other systems have used AI to advance student independence (e.g., Milton Hershey School) and to challenge students, educators, community members, and legislators to improve the state of learning, while infusing AI into the classroom (e.g.,

Utah Education System) (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Pillar (2014) engaged physical education teachers in AI action research to analyze teacher use of a game format of pedagogy. Outside of school, AI action research has also been used to create more playful and engaging museums that foster child well-being (Lester, Strachan, & Derry, 2014).

More recently, AI has been used within classrooms to help teachers promote positive classroom change and to support a positive classroom community (Doveston & Keenaghan, 2006). Doveston and Keenaghan's (2006) report on *Growing Talent for Inclusion*, a project initiated in 2002, explains a journey to improve relationships within the classroom. The project, which included 76 students and four teachers within three primary and secondary schools, used AI to teach educators how to spot talent in their students, rather than focusing on their struggles. Through an AI interview progress, teachers created a "Talent Spotting" program that facilitated student-teacher conversations on student strengths, rather than weaknesses. The results of the multi-year program suggest that student motivation increased, in addition to the quality of relationships within the classroom. This program was especially successful for students with social-emotional, behavioral and cognitive challenges.

Appreciative learning, which focuses on building students' strengths and potential, has also been utilized as a pedagogical approach in school-based research. Eow et al. (2010) conducted a study to determine whether appreciative learning can spark improved creativity and learning in 69, 13- and 14-year-old Malaysian students. This randomized, controlled experimental study exposed groups of students to a computer game with either an appreciative learning approach or a self-paced learning approach. Students were assessed with the Khatena-Torrance Creative Perception Inventory

(KTCPI) (Khatena & Torrance, 1998) to determine their own perception of personal creativity. Over the course of four weeks (16 hours of instruction and exposure) students were exposed to a computer game design program in a course facilitated by an individual teacher. Students in the appreciative learning treatment group were significantly more creative, as judged by the KTCPI.

Research Limitations and Future Directions

The above-mentioned stories and studies provide evidence that AI is in fact a PI and a POI as it cultivates aspects of flourishing and well-being (e.g., hope, relationship-building, engagement, and meaning). While AI and appreciative learning are reportedly being used, research on effectiveness continues to lag behind due to the variable nature of students, schools, and large scale system interventions. Many of the well-being outcomes (e.g., elevated self-esteem and hope) are evaluated based on self-report feedback and observation, rather than more systematic collection of pre- and post- standardized assessments. AI primarily exists as a form of action research within the school setting and within the community with youth.

There is an intensive call for assistance on teaching youth how to ask good questions to spark innovation, engagement, and well-being. To date, no research has focused on teaching youth how to ask appreciative questions. Of the AI-based research that has been conducted, researchers have identified that it is essential that the above-mentioned AI principles be translated into child-friendly language in order to prevent language barriers and promote understanding (Shuayb et al., 2009). In accordance with the GGS PosEd model (Norrish et al., 2013), best practice suggests that in order to benefit from AI principles and questioning, educators and parents must “teach it,” (“it”

being AI), "embed it" in everyday pedagogy and learning, and "live it." In order to fulfill these functions, literature may be an excellent means to begin learning, teaching, embedding, and living AI principles.

Use of Literature to Prompt Well-Being

In United States elementary schools, an average of 11 hours per school week is dedicated specifically to language arts, reading and writing (Perie, Baker, & Bobbitt, 1997). This is twice as much time than is devoted to any other subject area and does not include reading and writing that occurs within other subjects or outside of school (e.g., homework). One can assume that as students become more proficient in reading and writing, and as expectations grow, more activities dedicated to reading and writing are stimulated. Needless to say, reading and writing are essential components of learning and education. While this emphasis on language arts aims to improve achievement, PP research now suggests that reading literature which provides readers increased positive emotion and insight into life's meaning, purpose and relationships, also improves well-being outcomes (e.g., Pawelski & Moores, 2013). This is good news for PosEd, which calls for the application of PP research within an educational setting to increase academic success *and* well-being outcomes (Seligman et al., 2009). As reading is a large component of daily learning, it is well suited to be infused with PP to achieve positive results.

Fiction examines intricate details of human lives, their environments, values, purpose in life, and relationships. It has the capacity to both teach readers about aspects of human flourishing and elicit emotions that contribute to the readers' well-being (Pawelski & Moores, 2013). Moores argues that readers should be taught to be "critical

observers" of literary fiction, with a mindful eye on virtues, values, strengths, relationships, and beauty exemplified by story characters (Pawelski & Moores, 2013, p.30). Potkay (2013) declares that literature can be analyzed to identify strength and the joys in life. Readers can connect these aspects of well-being from the characters' lives to their own lives in order to make positive changes. Currently, there is a call for more literature that identifies joy, well-being and other positive aspects of human flourishing (Potkay, 2013), and authors are starting to craft more literature with an eye toward the positive (Pawelski & Moores, 2013). Currently in schools, many skills and lessons are taught through literature. This is the case for PosEd programs as well. For example, the PRP uses short stories and cartoons to teach students about well-being concepts like evaluating thoughts and overcoming and preventing challenging beliefs (Resiliency Research, n.d.). As reading is universally and naturally incorporated into school and bedtime routines, it is plausible that reading be used as a teaching strategy to educate youth on AI.

Writing Exceptional Children's Books

Through crafting a book to teach AI, youth and adults alike can learn to teach AI, embed AI in daily routines, and live it. In order to write a successful and meaningful children's book, one must consider multiple components of writing, including story format, theme, plot, story structure, character development, setting, and language (Shepard, 2000). In his book, *The Business of Writing for Children,* Aaron Shepard (2000) provides detailed information to walk the writer through book conception, writing, publishing, and marketing processes. Aaron Shepard has published over 14 picture books and multiple chapter books for children.

Shepard (2000) explains that a *picture story book* targets audiences from kindergarten through third grade or older. The typical book length is usually 32 pages long; however, when submitted in manuscript form, the typical submission is five to nine pages long (Shepard, 2000). These types of books have a more in-depth plot and greater amounts of text than a picture book. Picture story books need to have a theme, or a particular concept that the story conveys. The theme emerges in the literature through a depiction of dialogue, rather than explicit narratives. Themes are typically positive and convey characters' lives and adventures. This is different than the plot, which typically reflects some conflict and resolution of this conflict by the main character(s). Throughout the story, characters experience rise and falls of success, through which they learn valuable lessons and grow. Good plots can create peaks and tensions prior to a resolve and victory. Good story structure for a picture story book involves a standard sequence of a beginning, middle and end.

While books should be creative, it is important that books be written in an age-appropriate manner depending on the intended audience. When considering reader age range, a writer must consider readability, language, and rhythm. Shepard (2000) warns writers against rhyming; however, advocates for rhythm, alliteration and repetition. The language should include many direct quotes and dialog should make up a large part of the story. Shepard (2000) advises writers with some cautionary wisdom. He warns children's book writers against including "flashbacks" or events earlier in time due to child readers' difficulty with sequencing and time. He also advises that stories be written in first person for children, middle-school aged or older, and third person for younger readers. Third person entails the story being told from one consistent outside narrator. The story should

be told from this narrator's point of view. Finally, the story should be written only from past or present. Again, switching back and forth can confuse child-aged readers.

Children's book writing takes practice, feedback, self-evaluation, and critiques from several child and adult readers (Shepard, 2000). Prior to writing the story, time should be spent developing each character thoroughly. The main character of the story holds the most importance and should be an individual that the child reader can empathize with and relate to. This character should be close to the top end of the prospective reader age range. Characters should have their own mannerisms, physical traits, and language to make them stand out and become real. Likewise, the settings should occur in a place where the reader can relate and recognize. While the setting can be further developed, subsequent to finding an illustrator (which is often selected by a book publisher), it should also be a place that interests or is familiar to the reader. Shepard (2000) encourages writers to read their story aloud prior to submitting a manuscript to a publisher. The book should read aloud easily to an audience, draw the audience into the story and make them forget about the outside world, as they take a journey on a new adventure.

Book Proposal: Teaching Youth to Ask Beautiful Questions

"AI begins an adventure" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. xv). The current proposed AI-based picture story book for youth will attempt to present youth readers with the possibility of personally becoming catalysts for positive change. It is important that youth learn AI strategies and be exposed to AI in schools, as they have a mindset that can improve their communities. Marge Schiller, AI and appreciative education expert, lives by the foundational phrase "don't do anything about me without me" (Personal

Communication, June 24, 2014). Young people must be involved in shaping the community in which they live. Not only does this shape identity, but also a crucial sense of belonging (Morsillo & Fisher, 2007). Further, this involvement will provide youth with increased opportunities to be drawn in as a stakeholder in their futures (Miles, 2002). Through this picture story book, youth will learn about the process of AI, meaning the 4D Cycle and how to ask strength-based appreciative questions. Youth will be led on an adventure to discover their strengths and passions by way of watching main characters dream and design a community project with the use of "positive well-being questions and transformative learning discussions and activities" (Morsillo & Fisher, 2007, p.50). In accordance with the phrase "don't do anything about me without me," the book will be an intergenerational book, written by authors of three different generations, including children. (For a complete book prospectus, see Appendix C).

Stan, the main character of the book is in fifth grade. He's a typical fifth grader interested in crushing videogames and taking things apart to see how they work. He's got a definite quirky side that many kids in school shy away from. While he's quiet, his brain is always thinking about his next move. Stan's journey begins with an interaction with one of his friends who just joined the exclusive, yet informal school club, The Ocelots. The Ocelots are a group of boys who elected themselves to be joined in brotherhood. The Ocelots are experts at occasional meanness, exerting their power in the classroom. However, when Stan is charged by the school principal with bringing the school community together, he finds the "Gee Power" and suddenly learns the key to the future, as if he got a videogame code to win the final level. He discovers that one of his passions and strengths through interactive video gaming is teamwork. En route to discovering "We

Power," Stan works with the Ocelots to develop a recycling program to raise money to repair the school playground. Stan discovers that it is ok to have "Be Power," the power to be himself and use his strengths to make change happen. The more the class works together to share ideas and use diverse strengths, the more "See Power" arises, the power to see what is working in order to create positive change. (See Appendix D for an overview of Stan's "Powers," which are a youth-friendly iteration of the AI 4D Cycle).

This picture story book follows Stan on his journey of questions, questions that translate into change. The book will culminate with exercises (See Appendix E) and a glossary of appreciative questions to be used in intergenerational conversations (See Appendix B for a partial list of questions). This picture story book unleashes the capacity of AI to create communities where every generation feels like they belong. It aims to increase the frequency of youth's questioning and makes space for student curiosity and innovation. Teachers and families can create flourishing youth by teaching age appropriate AI strategies that increase positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, creativity, and achievement.

Conclusion

Now more than ever, innovation and inspiration are required to master the competitive job market and 21st century education. PP, the science of well-being, provides excellent support for facilitating creativity and achievement (Park, 2014). While for many years the business community has studied creativity and curiosity, now educators are beginning to place more emphasis on the importance of teaching beautiful questions (Berger, 2014). Action-oriented questions that build on strengths and passions have the potential to shape the future and influence individuals, groups and communities.

AI, a historically business or organizational POI, is also a PosEd intervention, as it has the potential to be embedded in curriculum, taught by educators and parents and modeled by all, in an effort to increase student achievement and well-being. Teaching AI facilitates the potential to unlock youth's capacity to identify strengths, build creativity, and ask the right questions to incite positive action. This positive educational tool stimulates the well-being of youth through an increase in positive emotion, engagement, relationship-building, meaning, and achievement. AI is a simple, yet powerful PI that builds hope, positive emotion, meaning and purpose, social skills, self-esteem, confidence, community connectedness, a sense of identity, and ownership over the future. Literature is an excellent means through which AI learning can take place. In the words of E.E. Cummings, "Always the beautiful answer who asks a more beautiful question." Now it is the time for our children to engage in intergenerational conversations encouraging them to discover their strengths and to dream and design their own future. How can youth and adults alike be a part of starting this inspirational journey to teach, learn, and live AI?

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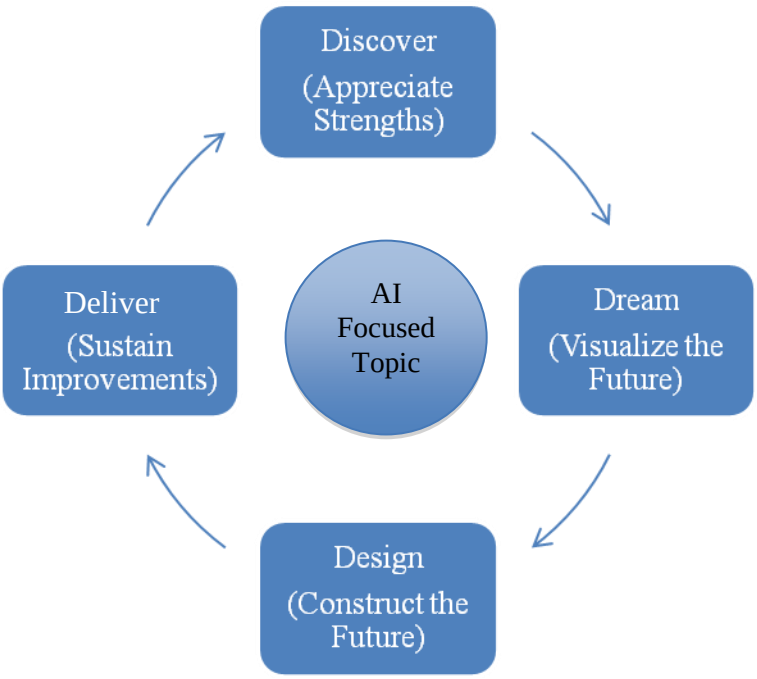
Appendix A: Appreciative Inquiry 4D Cycle

(Cooperrider et al., 2008; Morsillo & Fisher, 2007; Pillar, 2014)



Appendix B: Index of Appreciative Questions

- What is working well? (adapted from Pillar, 2014)
- Imagine what might be. (adapted from Pillar, 2014)
- Explore the best of 'what is' and 'what might be'(adapted from Pillar, 2014)
- What solutions already exist? (adapted from Pillar, 2014)
- What will the future look like? (adapted from Pillar, 2014)
- What are some of your success stories? (adapted from Pillar, 2014)
- Do you feel passionate about this activity? (Morsillo & Fisher, 2007)
- If you had a million dollars to improve this place/school, what would you want to see? (adapted from Morsillo & Fisher, 2007)
- What were your best memories of school at its best? (adapted from Ryan et al., 2014)
- What is your school doing now when it's at its best? (adapted from Ryan et al., 2014)
- What is it about school that makes these experiences possible? (adapted from Ryan et al., 2014)
- What are we doing well? (adapted from Ryan et al., 2014)
- What do you want to do more of? (adapted from Ryan et al., 2014)
- Describe a time you felt the most successful and alive? When and how did this happen? What were your experiences? (adapted from Cooperrider & McQuaid, 2012)
- What questions might unlock your interest and potential to get involved and make a difference? (Browne, n.d.a)
- What has inspired you to get involved? (Browne, n.d.a)
- What stories have stretched your hope for your future? (Browne, n.d.a)

- What do you value about this community? What's your favorite place to go and why? (Browne, n.d.a)
- What three dreams do you have for the future of your community/your country? (Browne, n.d.a)
- What do you think are some of the essential conditions to enable your community/your country as a whole to prosper? (Browne, n.d.a)
- Close your eyes and imagine _____ as you most want it to be a generation from now. What do you see and hear? What are you most proud about accomplishing? (adapted from Browne, n.d.b)

Appendix C: Book Prospectus

THE AUTHOR(S)/EDITOR(S)

1. **Name (in full):**

   Shira Reicher, Marjorie Schiller with Sarah and Max Schiller

2. **Name (as to appear on title page and in promotional literature):**

   Shira Reicher and Marge, Sarah and Max Schiller

3. **Order of appearance of authors' or editors' names (if more than one will be credited on title page and in promotional literature):**

   Shira Reicher and Marge, Sarah and Max Schiller

4. **For every person included in numbers 2 and 3, above, please provide:**

   a. Legal address:

Shira Reicher	*Marge Schiller*
1462 Reynolds Street	49 Rockwood Road
Baltimore, MD 21231	Hingham, MA 02043

   b. **Citizenship:** U.S. Citizenship (all authors)

   c. **Place and date of birth:**

   Shira Reicher (Baltimore, MD, March 18, 1982)

   Marge Schiller (Boston, MA, March 3, 1938)

   Sarah and Max Schiller (Boston, MA, November 13, 2003)

5. **Telephone (including area code):** 443-742-5566/954-788-3009

   (May we call you at home if necessary? ____x___Yes _____No)

6. Your academic degrees and current institutional affiliations:

Shira Reicher

Master of Arts in Psychology (MA)

Certificate of Advanced Study in School Psychology (CAS) (2007)

Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP)

Master of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) (August 2014), University of Pennsylvania

Marge Schiller

Master of Education (MEd)

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

7. **Membership in professional associations and societies (please indicate any in which you are an officer, officer-elect, or past officer):**

Shira Reicher

School Psychologists' Association of Anne Arundel County (President)

Maryland School Psychologists' Association (Board Member)

Maryland State Educators' Association (Member)

National Education Association (Member)

National School Psychologists' Association (Member)

Parent Teacher Association (Member)

Marge Schiller

Boston Lunch Club (Co-founder and Board Member)

Northeast Strength-Based Network (Founding Member)

Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus (Founding President)

Positive Change Core (Founding President)

Taos Institute (Thesis Advisor in PhD program)

8. Titles, dates, publishers, and prices of any previous books you have authored or edited:

Marge Schiller:

Schiller, M., Riley, D., and Holland, B.M. (2001). *Appreciative leaders: In the eye of the beholder.* Chagrin Falls, Ohio: The Taos Institute Publications, Second Edition.

9. Periodicals (journal name only) in which papers you have authored have been published or accepted:

Shira Reicher

Communiqué

Journal of Family Violence

Journal of School Psychology

Marge Schiller

Advances in Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry Practitioners

10. Names of prominent individuals (journal editors, public figures) of your acquaintance who may be helpful in the promotion of the book:

Marc Brown

David Cooperrider

Tom Rath

11. Is there a recognized authority (preferably of your acquaintance) whom you might consider asking to write a foreword for your book or to be quoted in the promotional literature?

Marc Brown

David Cooperrider

Tom Rath

12. Title: *Stan's Journey to See Power*

13. Explanation of scope and purpose:

"Crashhhhhhhhhhhhh. Swings swinging. Ladders flying. Monkey bars twirling. And just like that a huge lightning bolt thundered down, splintering the oldest tree standing next to the Lincoln Elementary School playground. The school that once won first place in the Dreamer County School District for top playgrounds now was playground-less. On Monday, after the storm, students returned as usual, early in the morning. Rushing through the halls to get to class on time, Stan felt that something seemed different today." Little did Stan know that he would soon turn from school nerd into school hero in a matter of days as he discovers his strength and courage to bring people together to dream and design the school's future.

"AI begins an adventure" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. xv).). This book will present youth readers, ages 8 to 12, with the possibility of personally becoming catalysts for positive change. Stan, the book's main character, will engage young readers in an adventure to discover their strengths and passions by way of watching him dream of and design a community project with his peers, using "positive well-being questions and transformative learning discussions and activities" (Morsillo & Fisher, 2007, p.50).

The current proposed Appreciative Inquiry (AI) - based picture story book for youth will attempt to present youth readers with the possibility of personally becoming catalysts for positive change. AI stems from the fields of positive organizational scholarship and

organizational development, and is a strength-based approach to building on past success in order to ask the right questions to transform the future. The premise of appreciative thinking is that outcomes are more innovative and abundant without a traditional focus on solving a problem. The use of strength-based, action-oriented questions can reshape our lives and the future. AI encourages the use of questioning, collaboration, curiosity, creativity and a 4D Cycle: *discovering* strengths, *dreaming* future possibilities, *designing* an action plan, and *delivering* the plan. For the past 15 years, AI has been used in schools with youth, resulting in positive outcomes for youth: increased creativity (Eowa et al., 2010), self-esteem (Browne, n.d.b), confidence (Browne, n.d.b.), sense of identity (Morsillo & Fisher, 2007), hope (Morsillo & Fisher, 2007), relationships and social skills (Dovestone & Keenaghan, 2006), community connectedness (Browne, n.d.b.), and a sense of ownership over the future (Shuayb et al., 2009). The picture story book creates an avenue for adults to learn and teach youth the principles of AI and the importance of appreciative questioning. Through this picture story book, youth will learn about the process of AI, the 4D Cycle and how to ask appreciative questions. AI principles and the 4D Cycle are translated into youth-friendly language. It is important that youth learn AI strategies and be exposed to AI in schools, as they have a mindset that can improve their communities. This involvement will provide them with increased opportunities to be involved as stakeholders in their futures (Miles, 2002).

15. Significant features (perhaps unique) compelling enough to persuade readers who already have books on the subject to purchase this one more (about 50 words that you believe will make good promotional material):

Imagine classrooms with empowered students designing plans, voicing their opinions, and feeling like they belong; a place where meanness is squashed with questions that pave the future for acceptance. Teach youth the power of appreciative questioning and inquiry using questions to unlock *See Power*, the power to see what is working!

16. Estimated length of the final manuscript in double-spaced typewritten pages including tables and illustrations:

The book is estimated to be 32 pages in length, with an additional two pages of activities and a question glossary.

17. **Estimated completion date of manuscript:** November 2014

18. **Your estimate of optimum price for this book:**

Seven dollars is an optimum price for this book ($6.49 is the average 2013 price for a children's mass market *paperback* book). If the book were an e-book or hardback book, the price would change. (SLJ's Average, 2013)

19. **Your estimate of maximum price (without overpricing the book):** $8.00

20. **Describe in their order of importance the audiences who will want to buy your book. Please be as specific as possible: list fields and job functions, how the book will be used, etc.**

To create flourishing and innovative citizens to compete in our increasingly diverse and competitive world, educators and caregivers can work together to teach youth how to

discover and build on successful aspects of the past, dream creatively about the future, ask outstanding questions to design plans, and deliver action.

a) *Educators:* While many educators recognize that asking good questions is critical to gaining knowledge and creativity, there are currently no courses or classes that teach this skill (Berger, 2014). This book will help educators to create innovators to compete in today's innovation-driven market. The proposed picture story book will help educators teach students effective questions to dream and design their futures. Strength-based questioning allows individuals to build on current skills, which can increase the speed and ease with which questions are answered. Optimistic questions can influence more innovation. An emphasis on teamwork and collaboration builds emotional intelligence, relationships and social skills.

b) *Caregivers:* This book will help caregivers to reinforce the importance of asking meaningful and strength-focused questions to increase their children's creativity, confidence, success, and innovation. Through reading this book at home, caregivers can help their children adopt more effective strength-based questioning. At home, this questioning construct can reinforced and modeled. The book will include an appendix with AI-oriented activities (Appendix E) and a quick guide of positive questions for parents, educators, and caregivers. The book provides for intergenerational conversations to build strengths, passions, and creativity.

c) *School-Based or Community-Based Mental Health Providers (School Counselors, School Psychologists and School Social Workers):* Approximately ten percent of school-age students exhibit low positive affect or (Eklund et al., 2011). These

students experience academic difficulties and less engagement in school (Antaramian et al., 2010). Jia Ng and colleagues (2014) call for "systematic efforts" to target this population. Every school across the United States has access to school-based mental health providers at least part time. These individuals engage students, parents, guardians, and educators in discussions about student strengths and weaknesses. They often conduct group and individual counseling sessions and sometimes deliver parent and guardian training. The proposed book is an excellent resource for use as a biblio-therapeutic technique to help students gain confidence and control over their future by way of crafting beautiful and powerful questions.

d) *Youth:* A picture story book targets audiences from kindergarten through third grade or older (Shepard, 2000). Research suggests that while children are expert questioners in preschool, by middle school engagement decreases and question-asking muscles atrophy (Berger, 2014; Busteed, 2013). While most AI action research has been conducted with pre-teenagers and adolescents (Eow et al., 2010; Morsillo & Fisher, 2007; Ryan et al., 2014), the targeted age range for this book will be 8-12 year-old or third through fifth grade students. However, the format of the text will be written at a third grade reading level. As the purpose of the text is to revitalize and boost youth's ability to ask good appreciative questions, this targeted age range will re-energize students to ask questions in later elementary years and throughout middle, high school years and beyond.

21. What previous knowledge is the reader assumed to have?

The average reader should be able to read and comprehend text at least at a third grade reading level. This book may be read to younger children or non-readers age four and up.

22. List (in order of importance) the professional journals to which the published book should be sent for review:

AI Practitioner, School Library Journal, Positive Psychology News Daily, Communiqué

23. List any organization whose membership lists you think might be used for direct mail promotion of your book. Indicate any of which you are a member (*):

Association of Independent Schools

Boys and Girls Club

Cartoon Network

Children's Media Association

Girl Scouts of America*

Maryland School Psychologists' Association*

Maryland State Education Association (MSEA)*

National Education Association*

National School Psychologists Association*

Parent Teacher Association*

Positive Change Core

Search Institute

The Appreciative Inquiry Commons

The Appreciative Inquiry List Serve

The Taos Institute

The Northeast Strengths-Based Network

Utah Education Association (UEA)*

Appendix D: Book Overview Infographic

Appendix E: Book Appendix AI Activity Guide

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a creative process that drives questions and future actions. The process builds on strengths and at looking at what is working. AI relies on a general understanding of personal strengths. The process involves teamwork and the 4D Cycle (referred to in the book as four types of Power). The first part of the cycle is the Discover Cycle: *Me Power*. During this phase, through questioning and reflection, we start to understand and learn about our own strengths. We start to label our strengths and to identify times in which we were at our best. In the next phase, the Dream Cycle: *Gee Power* (as in Gee Whiz! Eureka!), we start to understand our hopes and dreams. We start to think about what would be best for the future and the community. The Design Cycle: *We Power,* followed the Dream Cycle. We Power is the power to work as a team to make a dream happen. Intergenerational stakeholders are encouraged to work together (parents, teachers, students, siblings, grandparents) to make a plan happen. Resources and strengths are discussed. The last cycle is the Deliver Cycle: *Be Power*, the Power to put the plan into place; to be who you are; and to use your strengths to create action. The following activity suggestions may be used to help build the concept of AI and the power of positive questioning. It is encouraged to infuse these questions into daily activities.

Activity # 1: Identifying Strengths in Others

The first phase in the AI 4D Cycle is the *Discover* phase. After reading the book, readers will understand this phase as "Me Power," the power to understand one's own strengths. Before we experiment with finding our own strengths, we first work together to identify strengths of the main characters in *Stan's Journey to See Power.* After you identify and

explore main character strengths, identify when you saw the different Powers being used within the story.

Activity # 2: Discover "Me Power:" Discover Your Strengths

Sometimes it is difficult for us to think about things we excel in or are good at. Prior to this activity, if young readers need help becoming more aware of their strengths there are some online free strength-based assessments available. One example is the VIA Youth Survey of Character Strengths (Ages 10-17, http://www.viacharacter.org/). As a beginning strengths-finding exercise, pair students in groups or pairs. At home, families can encourage young readers to work with familiar adults within the home or community.

Together, work through the following questions:

1. What are your top strengths?
2. Ask a friend, classmate, parent, anyone else who knows you well what they think your top strengths are. What did they say? Are these similar or different from the strengths that you listed?
3. What activities do you do that allow you to use your strengths?
4. How can you increase your opportunity to use your strengths?
5. What are your most powerful strength combinations?

What are your best supporting strengths?

Activity # 3: Creating the Best Classroom

After reading the book, split the classroom into teams to work on designing a project to improve the community. The class will work through the 4D Cycle within their teams to create a project together. This assignment can be incorporated into daily journals, reflections, morning meetings, and spelling lists.

Discover: **Me Power**	- What are some of the best times you remember being in school? What made them the best times? - When were you at your best at school? - What are your favorite things to do in school? At home? - What do you love most about your teachers? - What is the most important thing you do in school? - What do people say you're good at?
Dream: **Gee Power**	- Imagine what next year in school will look like. What are you most excited about? - What do you hope to learn next year? - Draw a picture or write a poem about the best possible classroom/ school.
Design: **We Power**	- What will make this classroom the perfect place? - Who will be involved in making this classroom a perfect place? - How can we make this classroom a perfect place? - What will we <u>do</u> (rather than need or want) to make it perfect?
Deliver: **Be Power**	- What help/resources do we need? - What people need to be involved? - How do we know when we've accomplished our goal? - What will change as a result of this project?