



**Excerpt from the Afterword in  
*Appreciative Inquiry in Higher Education: A  
Transformative Force, 2nd Edition.* (2020).  
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WHEN WE WROTE the first edition of *Appreciative Inquiry in Higher Education: A Transformative Force*, we had been practicing Appreciative Inquiry for many years. In writing it, we sought to both reflect what was happening through case studies and also to expand our thinking about how Appreciative Inquiry ‘being’ and ‘doing’ might be practiced and seen with new eyes. When we had the opportunity to do a modest addition to the book and re-publish it as a second edition, we were excited about revisiting some of the evolving ideas in the book. We were excited because people in higher education and, in fact, in all walks of life have been using the book to further their work in Appreciative Inquiry, and we wanted to keep providing a resource for the practice of Appreciative Inquiry in life, work, and organizations. Over the past years, more and more people from not-for-profits, business, health, and other areas have found the agendas, case studies, and ideas within this book both applicable and transferable.

In our journey of practicing Appreciative Inquiry, we grew to see the impact of it on being resilient, both personally and organizationally. This led to us researching and writing the book *Building Resilience with Appreciative Inquiry: A Leadership Journey through Hope, Despair, and Forgiveness* (2018). In the foreword of that book, David Cooperrider reflects on the evolving nature of Appreciative Inquiry:

At the lowest rung—and perhaps the easiest domain in which to practice AI—is the appreciative inquiry into the extraordinary, the best in human experience, those times of positive deviance that jump out. At the second and sequentially more difficult rung is the capacity to do AI during times of the ordinary—at those times that are so taken for granted that we often fail to apprehend, appreciate, or even attempt to search for everything that is giving life. Here we are talking about the capacity for seeing the best in the seemingly ordinary and insignificant events, where there are no starbursts, no mountaintop experiences . . . And then there is a third developmental level for the practice of AI—the least understood . . . So, this, the third level of elevated AI capacity, is not appreciative inquiry into moments of excellence or into experiences of life giving in the ordinary, but AI in the midst of tragedy . . . AI methodology is relevant everywhere, from the extraordinary to the tragic, not just in the moments of success and exceptional deeds (McArthur-Blair and Cockell, 2018, p xvii & xviii).

In both our books we address all three rungs of AI and rather than using the word “tragedy” for the third rung, we use the language of “challenging times.” Challenging times range from minor challenges to tragedy and are defined by the perspective of the people involved.

This Afterword is an opportunity to reflect on some aspects of applying AI practice to all three rungs. In particular, we reflect on those being applied in the third rung through Critical Appreciative Inquiry (chapter 4) and the ALIVE model (chapter 5). We begin with some tools and processes for Appreciative Inquiry practice at all three developmental rungs. So we have organized this Afterword into these three areas:

1. Tools and Processes for Appreciative Inquiry Practice. We share some tools and processes that we have been using in our AI practice that might be useful in yours. These tools and processes are in addition to all the ones (agendas, models, facilitation strategies) already included in the book. We also include some examples of situations where these tools and processes have been used. Most of the processes are from planning, organizational change, and team development engagements, and some are from coaching. They can be used in the work of all the AI rungs: the extraordinary, the ordinary, and the complexity of challenging times. We have used these tools to advance the ways in which organizations can design and lean toward their future: in summits and workshops—anywhere people

gather to design the future of their organization. The background theories and underpinnings for these tools and processes can be found throughout the book in various chapters.

2. Critical Appreciative Inquiry (CAI). Since the writing of this book, many have expressed interest in this idea of how we can focus on inclusion in Appreciative Inquiry work. Jeanie crafted the concept of Critical Appreciative Processes as part of her doctoral studies in 2005, and together we have evolved this concept. Critical Appreciative Inquiry (chapter 4) is steeped in the principles, theory, and practice of AI and adds to that the recognition that in Appreciative Inquiries, attention must be paid to whether the experience is inclusive. When we wrote the first edition of this book, we were clear that these ideas were evolving, and it is fair to say that they still are evolving. And it is a formidable time in the world to work toward inclusive action, belonging, and social justice. This work resides in that third rung of AI because without the possibility of inclusion in processes, outcomes, and being, there can be no inquiry that creates a future for all. This section revisits the concepts of Critical Appreciative Inquiry and provides some examples of how it is being used in practice.
3. Evolving Resilience Commentary: ALIVE and Appreciative Resilience. We developed the ALIVE model for using AI in challenging times (chapter 5). This model further evolved, and we incorporated it into the Appreciative Resilience model (McArthur-Blair and Cockell, 2018). Here we will revisit the ALIVE model and its link to our resilience work. This too is the work of that third rung—appreciative inquiry in challenging times. This work is about the power of recognizing what is and inquiring into what might be—no matter the state we find within ourselves or around us. It is about being able to sustain ourselves as individuals and as organizations.

This afterword on AI practice and being is a reflection on some of our Appreciative Inquiry thinking over the last few years, and it is our hope that, along with the original sections in this book, it advances your practice of Appreciative Inquiry. In some ways, we are returning to ideas we explored several years ago and looking at them in a new light, reinforcing ideas that still hold resonance for us, and holding up some ideas to a new light so that we can add additional thoughts and reflective questions. Everyone who works in and/or leads within an organization has a stake in creating a place where innovation can happen, where people can find meaning, and where the power of an appreciative question can change the future. Appreciative Inquiry remains for us the creative force that can ignite these things. Like any practice, it is forever evolving as new things arise and new socially constructed meaning is created. This is our current thinking, and even as we write we know it will continue to evolve, grow, and change.