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Abstract This chapter reviews the contributions of David L. Cooperrider, starting from his the outline of Egalitarian Theory, his articulation of Appreciative Inquiry, his work studying social innovations, and promoting the Business as an Agent of World Beneﬁt project. The chapter traces his early inﬂuences including his parents and uncles, his mentors at Case Western Reserve University – Suresh Srivastva and Ronald Fry, and the writings of Kenneth Gergen, and others. Finally, the chapter outlines the way in which his work has had an impact in the ﬁeld of Organizational Change.

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David L. Cooperrider - Social construction - Appreciative inquiry - Business as agent of world beneﬁt

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2 of Appreciative Inquiry

3 Frank J. Barrett

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# 29 Introduction

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30 David Cooperrider is Distinguished University Professor of Organizational Behavior

31 at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) in Cleveland, Ohio. He is the

32 co-founder and originator of Appreciative Inquiry, an approach to social organiza-

33 tional change that has revolutionized traditional approaches to action research in

34 Organizational Development. Appreciative Inquiry has had a powerful inﬂuence in

35 several areas in the social sciences and in forms of practice. He has written and edited

36 25 books and over 100 articles and book chapters. He served as the co-editor of the

37 Journal of Corporate Citizenship and co-edits the series on Advances for Apprecia-

38 tive Inquiry. He was given the Distinguished Contribution to Workplace Learning by

39 American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) on the Porter Award for

40 best writing in the ﬁeld of Organizational Development was awarded the Peter

41 F. Drucker Distinguished Fellow by the Drucker School of Management,

42 co-authored the Academy of Management Organizational Development and Change

43 best paper award, and won the Aspen Institute Faculty Pioneer Award for his impact

44 on sustainability. The Champlain College’s Stiller School of Business honored his

45 impact by creating the David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry.

# 46 Influences and Motivation: Family Roots and Seminal Teachers

## 47 His Family Roots: A Combination of Head and Heart

48 David grew up in Oak Park Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. His formative period, in the

49 1960s and 1970s, was a time of social and racial unrest and his family was in the

50 midst of it. His father, Loy, was a Lutheran minister who came from a family of

51 Lutheran ministers – David’s grandfather and four uncles were also Lutheran

52 ministers. The oldest of the four, his Uncle Ed, a prestigious theologian, and graduate

53 of the University of Chicago was the head of the Lutheran Press. David recalled his

54 grandfather and uncles sitting around the table discussing theological topics, asking

55 challenging and conceptually rigorous questions. In the Lutheran tradition of Karl

56 Barth, Paul Tillich, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, these debates were centered on exis-

57 tential issues of “ultimate concern,” to paraphrase Paul Tillich, questions that asked

58 what it means to be a full human being. David heard his father and uncles in lively

59 dialogue, debating what it meant to live a purposeful life and how to be part of a

60 community that supports and the sacramental nature of life-giving community, one

61 that supported members’ higher calling. In the Lutheran tradition, he was surrounded

62 with a notion that humans are imperfect but on a journey of formation toward a

63 higher ideal. It espoused that any notion of love of God for men and women would

64 be embodied in community, that the True, the Good, and the Beautiful were mutually

65 intermingled with human relationships.

66 It must have been a fruitful time for any curious adolescent to live within these

67 theological questions of life’s ultimate purpose, particularly against the backdrop of

68 controversial issues of social and racial justice. For David’s father and his uncles, it

69 was a real test of the Lutheran conception of the life-giving force of community.

70 These early discussions must have planted seeds in David’s imagination. Perhaps it

71 was his ﬁrst formative experience witnessing role models passionately engaged in a

72 rigorous exploration of theories and concepts that could have practical implications

73 in helping people live meaningful lives. He was learning that a life devoted to

74 inquiry and scholarship is a noble calling.

75 His father Loy was particularly passionate about civil rights and race relations and

76 was an active change agent at a time when racial tensions were peaking. Loy was

77 instrumental in the early 1970s in working against institutional housing discrimina-

78 tion. Loy took these battles for justice head on, confronting racism in his congrega-

79 tion in the strongest terms, such that the stress of his activities eventually compelled

80 him to leave the ministry. (I knew his father. He was a man of short stature but a

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81 veritable giant of energy. I recall meeting him at their summer home on a lake in

82 Wisconsin that he was putting up for sale. When I told him that I was hoping to ﬁnd a

83 summer vacation place for my family, he offered to sell me the Wisconsin home and

84 volunteered to ﬁnance it himself. He knew that as a graduate student I had few

85 resources, but he was interested in my nascent dream and he was ﬂeshing out in

86 detail what an ideal future would be like, how I could expand the home, build a dock

87 for a boat, invite cousins and friends for visits in the summer, swim, ski, boat, golf.

88 Nothing about his conversation would be remarkable except for one dimension: this

89 all occurred within the ﬁrst 30 min of our very ﬁrst meeting. He instinctively

90 assessed my present state (as a resource poor graduate student), listened to my

91 dreams and wishes, began to encourage me to dream about the possibilities that

92 could be realized, and offered support for ways to keep my dream alive into the

93 future. Twenty years before Appreciative Inquiry would be fully developed, Loy

94 Cooperrider brought me through the full 4-D cycle in less than half an hour. He was

95 creating a provocative proposition in real time.)

96 His father’s sermons were often provocative challenges to the congregation to

97 live up to their highest values and purpose. His father and uncles probably worked

98 deliberately to see their white middle class congregations who they were and at the

99 same time continually holding out visions of who they could be, and how they could

100 grow and transform themselves and others. This is the double vision that is embodied

101 in many of David’s practices and writings, particularly in his notion of provocative

102 propositions.

103 Fran Cooperrider, David’s mother, was an active member of the Lutheran Church.

104 Where Loy was serious and focused, Fran had a disarmingly warm and joyful

105 presence. She reached out to community members, held gatherings in the family

106 home in which women would meet in circles, encouraging one another and lifting

107 one another up with encouragement and hopeful images of possibility. While his

108 father’s discourse was serious and challenging, his mother’s was warm and inviting.

109 David accompanied his mother as she worked in inner city churches.

110 David learned about the power of ideas to make a practical difference in peoples’

111 lives, that head and heart are best when working in combination, that relationships

112 based on inquiry, curiosity, and wonder are crucial to social change.

## 113 The Influence of Suresh Srivastva

114 David’s mentor at CWRU was Suresh Srivastva, the chair of the Organizational

115 Behavior department. As a mentor, Suresh was passionately dedicated to his stu-

116 dents. He had an open-door policy for his mentees and had what seemed like endless

117 hours of time and attention for them. He often said that he was interested in the

118 development of the whole person; the mind, the heart, and the spirit, and loved

119 dialoguing about philosophical ideas that stimulate thinking. He was especially

120 known for his provocative, challenging (and sometimes uncomfortable) questions.

121 Suresh’s interests transcended academic disciplines. He would seldom suggest

122 that his mentees read journal articles or single studies in the ﬁeld of Organizational

123 Behavior or Management. He downplayed research approaches that sought to

124 “capture” human dynamics by operationalizing dimensions with empirical scales.

125 He continually emphasized the importance of relationships and interaction as the

126 core unit of analysis in organizational systems. Organizations, he felt, are centers of

127 human relatedness, sites where people care, grow, learn, develop, and co-create.

128 Suresh also was concerned, almost to the point of obsession, with inquiry, particu-

129 larly the power of questions as interventions in human systems. He encouraged his

130 students to pursue and create “knowledge of consequence.” Finally, he eschewed

131 any notion of a value-free approach to social science. He openly called for a

132 normative view of social research. He wanted his students to use value-driven

133 methods that would contribute to the betterment of organizations, society, and the

134 larger world.

135 He encouraged his students to read books (rather than articles) because they

136 offered a full-length exploration of provocative ideas. In the style of an Oxford Don,

137 he would assign history books, philosophy books, works of literature and art. Suresh

138 legitimized inquiry as a spiritual endeavor, and gave credence to the search for books

139 that would culminate in several of the philosophical sources that ~~would~~ David would

140 later draw upon.

141 David recalls:

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142 Suresh cared about me as a whole human being. His presence was a powerful intervention.

143 He could see into your soul, your doubts, your fears, your potential, your joy. He could sense

144 when I wasn’t feeling up for it. His caring was deep. He wouldn’t let me stay in a place of

145 doubt. He would push. He said at one point, “*in your work, it*’*s your presence that makes the*

146 *difference*.”

147 I was attracted to his towering sense of purpose, his commitment to creating knowledge that

148 would have impact on the human condition, knowledge of enduring consequence. He was

149 always putting human relatedness at the center of his inquiry and he carried that forward into

150 his work with groups, including the power of co-inquiry. No one else was talking like that.

151 He made learning dramatic because he wanted us to know that learning makes a real

152 difference. His mother had been part of the Ghandian revolutionary movement in India.

153 Suresh wanted to build a better world through the construction of ideas. When he kept saying

154 that ‘every concept we develop can make a difference for years,’ I started to believe him.

155 David would carry this spirit with him as he began working through his disser-

156 tation. As he was piling through mounds of data, he was primed to notice the power

157 of ideas.

158 Other Inﬂuences: Rader’s Aesthetic Theory, Sweitzer’s “Reverence for Life,” and

159 Gergen’s Transformation of Social Knowledge.

160 David’s wife, Nancy, holds an undergraduate degree in Art. David was particu-

161 larly inﬂuenced by a philosophy book of Nancy’s, Melvin Rader’s *A Modern Book of*

162 *Aesthetics* (Rader, [1978](#_bookmark17)), that explores the creative process and the meaning of

163 artistic forms of inquiry. Rader discusses the difference between scientists who

164 seek to verify facts and artists who are concerned with the “expression of values”

165 (Rader, [1978](#_bookmark17), p. xix). Values and the vivid qualities of experience cannot be captured

166 in scientiﬁc description, which according to Rader, are real but superﬁcial.” Rader

167 writes: “you can explain the sunset according to uniform natural laws, but this leaves

168 out its radiance” (Rader, [1978](#_bookmark17), p. xxii). What we value most is expressed not in a

169 language of facts, but in a language of appreciation, a language of feeling, sentiment,

170 volition, values – in short, a language of appreciation that seeks to be true to the

171 immediacy of vivid experience. When Rader claimed that there is no language for

172 the world of value, vividness, radiance “comparable to the exact language of

173 science,” David must have been intrigued by the challenge to provide a language

174 for the more elusive yet vital life experiences. That curiosity that eventually led him

175 to qualitative research and the grounded theory approaches of Glazer, Strauss, and

176 Corbin which favored using language that reﬂects the experience of participants.

177 Rader made an intriguing distinction. He talked about “communities of interpreta-

178 tion” which for him meant scientists; and he talked about artists in terms of

179 “communities of appreciation.” For David this raised a series of questions. Why

180 were these two kinds of communities – appreciation and science – held separate?

181 Couldn’t science also be about valuing?

182 David was also inﬂuenced by theologian-philosopher Albert Schweitzer’s notion

183 of a “reverence for life,” from an anthology that sat on David’s father’s bookshelf.

184 Schweitzer felt that the Enlightenment search for an objective ethics had failed and

185 that the ethical foundation of civilization should be afﬁrmation of life. He called for

186 an ethics of reverence for life in all its forms, (a view that was consistent with

187 David’s later expansive devotion to sustainability and business as an agent of world

188 beneﬁt). Sweitzer writes:

189 As a matter of fact, everything which in the usual ethical valuation of inter-human relations is

190 looked upon as good can be traced back to the material and spiritual maintenance or

191 enhancement of human life and to the effort to raise it to its highest level of value.

192 (Schweitzer, [1947](#_bookmark18), p. 262)

193 We can see traces here of ideas that will appear in David’s work – the notion of

194 “inter-human” social science, the search for life-giving forces, articulating the

195 “highest values” of a social system operating at its best. David would reshape

196 many of these constructs in his articulation of “appreciative inquiry.”

197 When David was involved in his dissertation research at the Cleveland Clinic

198 Foundation (described below), he came upon the social constructionist theories of

199 Kenneth Gergen. David was moved by Gergen’s notion that social theory can be a

200 generative inﬂuence in shaping future worlds in desirable directions. These ideas

201 also resonated with Suresh’s notion that traditional social science is limiting because

202 it seeks to predict, to articulate unalterable laws, to have the ﬁnal word. Suresh felt

203 strongly that researchers must appreciate the potential of humans to change and

204 shape the world. While Suresh shared these notions, Gergen provided a rich logic.

205 Gergen’s article became the philosophical and intellectual impetus that would help

206 explain what was happening in the dissertation study (explored below), an elegant

207 and powerful articulation legitimizing Suresh’s view that language, especially the-

208 oretical language, can be a positive force for change in social systems.

209 David was also deeply inﬂuenced by Ron Fry, one of our Organizational Behav-

210 ior professors at Case Western Reserve University and a member of David’s disser-

211 tation committee. Ron’s patient and persistent support for his students is legendary.

212 But more speciﬁcally he has a gift for working with small and large groups, a skill he

213 no doubt ﬁne-tuned from his mentor, Richard Beckhard at MIT. Ron has a Buddha-

214 like presence and an ability to stay focally present, attend to relational dynamics, and

215 read the tone and rhythm of the group. And he has a sense of timing – he seems to

216 know when and how to ask provocative questions that help groups move forward.

217 One time when David and I were consulting to a particularly conﬂicted and chal-

218 lenging client system, he said this the evening before we were to meet with the

219 group:

220 When I get in tough systems like this one, I close my eyes and envision Ron Fry. He just

221 knows how to pay attention and not get pulled down by relational dynamics. He always sees

222 where a group needs to go next and his thinking is never cloudy. He’s a master of attention.

223 He’s the best consultant I have ever seen.

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224 In fact, many of the techniques that have become codiﬁed in Appreciative Inquiry

225 practice stem from the practice and style of Ron.

# 226 Key Contributions and Insights: Appreciative Inquiry, Egalitarian

227 Theory, and Social Innovation

## 228 Egalitarian Theory

229 Through the mentorship of Suresh Srivastva, David began doing research at the

230 Cleveland Clinic Foundation (CCF), a renowned health care facility a few blocks

231 from CWRU. CCF already had a renowned reputation as a professional partnership

232 performing leading edge research and high-quality care in treating the most compli-

233 cated diseases. One of Suresh’s senior students in 1979, Alan Jensen was working on

234 his dissertation there, studying the physicians’ approach to leadership and manage-

235 ment. His dissertation was a study of how doctors, trained in medical specialties

236 applied their professional instincts to the leadership and management of the organi-

237 zation. The focus was on the individual. While helping Jensen do interviews as a

238 junior research assistant, David became interested in the organization level data.

239 Suresh asked David to report some preliminary observations to the CEO and

240 Chairman of the Board of Governors, Dr. Bill Kiser.

241 In that meeting, Dr. Kiser asked David if he could take the set of interviews with

242 all the top physicians, examine the data, and do an organizational diagnosis.

243 Dr. Kiser felt that with hundreds of committees, the whole system was confusing,

244 and inefﬁcient, and he saw communication breakdowns throughout the system. As a

245 physician he believed that a diagnosis of the system’s problems would be helpful to

246 him as the CEO. David agreed that in the interviews there was likely some helpful

247 information on organizational dynamics.

248 But the more he reﬂected on the request, David did not feel right about creating

249 diagnosis. He had been thoroughly trained in approaches to organizational diagnosis

250 but felt it would take everyone astray from the bigger story. There was, in David’s

251 mind, a monumental social invention happening here. So, David sat down with his

252 advisor Suresh and shared the exhilaration: “this is possibly the most important

253 organizational innovation in the world” and therefore “I’m not sure we should be

254 doing an organizational diagnosis as Dr. Kiser is calling for; we might miss the

255 precious details and larger importance of the breakthrough innovation.” Suresh

256 quickly agreed with David and told him to go with his curiosity. He said something

257 like: “lead with your excitement– your task is to ﬁnd everything that propels

258 potential and possibility in this emerging group innovation—and, by the way, forget

259 everything you’ve ever learned about organizational development.”

260 David began to look at the data from a different perspective than the one Jensen

261 had in mind. In particular what interested Suresh Srivastva and David Cooperrider

262 was the governance model that informed the group practice, and this became the

263 focus of his dissertation. David also did not do the organization diagnosis that the

264 Chairman of the Board of Governors initially wanted. David re-examined the 1,000

265 pages of interview data that he and Allen had collected. But instead of diagnostic

266 analysis he poured over the mountain of notes by quietly noticing and yet setting

267 *aside in a sideways glance* all the accounts of failures, problems, dysfunctions, or

268 seeming barriers and breakdowns. And he asked of the mountain of data and from

269 the deep listening conversations, only one rigorous question: “what gives life to this

270 nascent organizational form—what makes it possible—and when it is most alive and

271 why?” The ﬁrst report on both the discoveries and the emergent themes (these

272 visionary themes took the best of the best and created speculative statements of

273 ideal-type possibility for the future) was presented to CCF leaders in 1981.

274 David’s dissertation was going to be a grounded theory that explored the nature of

275 shared governance focusing speciﬁcally on what gives life to the organization, what

276 is happening when the system is operating at its very best. But soon, when the

277 appreciative analysis was presented to the Board of Governors there was interest and

278 enthusiasm. Seeing the positive reaction, Dr. Kiser, the Chairman of the Board of

279 Governors, put forward a question: “Do you think we can we do this same kind of

280 appreciative approach not simply with our 300-person physician group, but all 8,000

281 people?” Even more important than the egalitarian theory, noticed the researcher,

282 was the way the appreciative approach was igniting interest, imaginative dialogue,

283 and change.

284 From there, David’s real dissertation topic began to take a whole new shape.

285 Because of the remarkable way the inquiry was creating such a powerful and positive

286 stir, the research focus shifted to trace how this kind of appreciative approach could

287 affect change. With time one and time two type data collection, the dissertation

288 tracked the *inquiry-and-change* relationship and it built the ﬁrst theory and vision of

289 appreciative inquiry as a way to build generative theory, where theory is practice and

290 inquiry equals intervention. (This was consistent with Suresh’s belief in the power of

291 questions as self-fulﬁlling).

292 With no other intervention than data collection, appreciative analysis, and feed-

293 back, David tracked how inquiry intervenes. Later he would describe that remark-

294 able moment with members of the Board as a “Heisenberg effect on steroids” – the

295 observer effect of inquiry in human systems was the real story emerging here.

296 Inspired by Suresh’s belief in the power of ideas, David was becoming a *theoretical*

297 *activist* where theory and practice are not opposites.

298 Out of David’s qualifying paper and later dissertation, David and Suresh

299 co-authored an article that explored a theory of “the egalitarian organization”

300 (Cooperrider, 1986; Srivastva & Cooperrider, 1986), describing the “ideal member-

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301 ship situation.” This was a construct borrowed from Habermas’ notion of the “ideal

302 speech situation,” a dialogical situation in which participants can have rational

303 dialogue, are free to make assertions and beliefs and are free of coercive forces.

304 The “egalitarian organization” article explored the life-giving core of the collective

305 practice. The paper posited “ideal type themes” that appreciated the best of the

306 system. These themes were a provocative stretch and posited that there are three

307 elements that the doctors hold as ideals – a spirit of excellence, (seeking to be the

308 best they possibly can be), a spirit of inclusion (in which all voices are invited and

309 valued), and a spirit of consensus (in which members operate under the belief that

310 they are at their best when they seek consensus from all members). David and

311 Suresh, in a simple footnote to the egalitarian organization paper, called this an

312 “appreciative inquiry” of the life-giving forces that allowed CCF to thrive and

313 innovate.

## 314 Appreciative Inquiry: The Surprising Power of Questions

315 David presented his emerging themes to the Cleveland Clinic’s Board of Governors

316 and in a footnote explained that the study was not focusing on problems but was an

317 “appreciative analysis” that seeks to articulate what gives life to this system. Several

318 leaders in CCF were intrigued by the report and asked David to talk to their

319 departments. The emergent themes inspired a hopeful and energetic dialogue during

320 strategic planning sessions, inspiring members to explore how they could move

321 closer to their ideals. David and Suresh learned that the inquiry into the system’s

322 strengths had a surprising impact that moved members further in the direction of

323 their highest ideals. David began to notice how the theoretical contributions from his

324 research were inspiring a dialogue that simultaneously triggered the physicians to

325 notice the core strengths of their collective practice while also stretching them to

326 consider ways to extend these principles. It was a dynamic consistent with Gergen’s

327 proposal that theory should be formative and generative. Expanding on the method-

328 ology chapter from David’s dissertation, David and Suresh published “Appreciative

329 Inquiry into Organizational Life” in the inaugural RODC volume in 1986 empha-

330 sizing the generative potential of theory building in transforming organizations. The

331 chapter asserts that action research has not fulﬁlled its promise in creating innovative

332 theory that inspires novel forms of organizing. The chapter made a number of

333 contributions. Action research is biased toward a deﬁciency orientation focused on

334 problem solving, one that is conservative, utilitarian, limited in inspiring innovation.

335 Building on Gergen’s work, theory has generative potential to inspire innovative

336 forms of action. Finally, the problem orientation of action research has truncated

337 researchers’ capacity for wonder, to ask questions that marvel at the miraculous and

338 mysterious nature of social-organizational life.

339 The notion that appreciative inquiry could be a powerful intervention tool (rather

340 than only as a research approach) was a surprising, unexpected discovery that grew

341 out of the Cleveland Clinic study. The process of inquiry itself is an intervention.

342 This insight has led to the surprising spread of Appreciative Inquiry as an

343 intervention into organizational and social systems in several sectors, many of

344 which have been documented and published (For reviews of Appreciative Inquiry

345 interventions, see Bushe and Kassam [2005](#_bookmark14)).

346 Appreciative Inquiry has been developed further in subsequent publications,

347 including Cooperrider and Whitney ([2001](#_bookmark23)) and Barrett and Fry ([2005](#_bookmark13)). After

348 participating in several change interventions, David began to notice a learning

349 pattern that he later articulated as the 4-D cycle of change: discover (identiﬁcation

350 of strengths that give life to the organization); dream (envisioning what the organi-

351 zation could evolve toward based on past strengths); design (creating the processes

352 and structures that support the life-giving forces); and destiny (realizing the strength-

353 based vision and keeping it alive into the future).

354 In the early 2000s, inspired by the Search Conference method, David began to

355 design large group interventions informed by AI, known as the Appreciative Inquiry

356 Summit (see Ludema et al., [2003](#_bookmark15); Powley et al., [2004](#_bookmark16)) in which hundreds of

357 participants would gather for one to three days to use AI to develop strategic futures.

358 These events were organized around the 4D cycle of Appreciative Inquiry, beginning

359 with systematically surfacing the positive core of the organization, imagining desired

360 futures, and designing ways forward. Several organizations, including United Reli-

361 gions Initiative, the US Navy, Roadway, and others held AI Summits.

362 Studying Social Innovations at The Global Level: GEM, BAWB, UN Global

363 Impact, Fowler Center and Inquiry into Positive Institutions.

364 In 1990, David, Bill Pasmore and several of their organizational behavior doc-

365 toral students at CWRU began to research globally focused organizations. David

366 received a $3.5 million grant from US AID to bring the ﬁeld of OD and leadership

367 training into the world of NGO’s and PVO’s. They worked with several

368 organizations including Save the Children, World Vision, Nature Conservancy, and

369 World Relief, using appreciative inquiry methods to study social innovation. David

370 and his students offered management education, consultation, built networks among

371 systems and used AI to cultivate the best ideas, methods, skills, and practices for

372 strengthening organizations and building partnerships. They found that when orga-

373 nizations explore deeply the question of what gives life to the system when it is most

374 alive, it emboldens them and inspires them to become more pro-social and expansive

375 in their planning and thinking. These organizations begin to see their own organi-

376 zations as nested within a larger global system and to expand their concerns outward

377 in wider circles, begin to consider and to take more pro social initiatives. They

378 hosted several conferences bringing these organizations together for knowledge

379 sharing and network building, inviting them to share their life-giving core, best

380 practices, and to build partnerships.

381 This was the ﬁrst effort in David’s expansive moves to work with ever larger

382 systems. The program acknowledged the radical interdependence around the world

383 that is at the root of many challenges, transnational issues that cross conventional

384 borders. The belief was that no global challenge can be adequately addressed

385 without working in and through organizations. Their approach to studying these

386 organizations was appreciative, to challenge the deﬁcit-focused science of global

387 change with special emphasis on constructive human responses to the global agenda.

388 The aim of this program was to search for new forms of human cooperation and

389 global action. Acknowledging the proliferation of global corporations, global net-

390 works, NGO’s, David wrote:

[AU7](#_bookmark30)

391 The logic is simple: there is not one item on the global agenda for change that can be

392 understood (much less responded to) without a better understanding of organizations. More

393 than anywhere else, the world’s direction and future are being created in the context of

394 human organizations and institutions.

395 This was the beginning of a larger research program into novel social innovations

396 devoted to noble human purposes, efforts that crossed national and organizational

397 boundaries to link ideas, people, and resources. In 1999, David chaired a conference

398 and co-edited a volume with Jane Dutton *Organizational Dimensions of Global*

399 *Change: No Limits to Cooperation* (Cooperrider & Dutton, [1999](#_bookmark22)). The subtitle is

400 telling and is a nod to the Club of Rome’s classic *Limits to Growth.* While there

401 might be limits to ecological growth, there are no limits to human cooperation that

402 could innovate to transform these challenges. The conference and ensuing book

403 brought together several organizational scholars exploring the cooperative potential

404 of organizations working across boundaries to address global issues; his doctoral

405 students wrote several case studies on innovative global organizations.

406 David’s instinct has been to approach change systemically, at the scale of the

407 whole system. He began to co-inquire into ever larger groups. David was deeply

408 impacted by the 9/11 attacks and particularly the choice of the World Trade Center as

409 the prime target. He recalls:

[AU8](#_bookmark31)

410 When the world trade towers came down and as I’m watching it over and over in the media, I

411 kept seeing the words “world” and “trade” as “business” and “society.” This notion of a clash

412 of civilizations with radical Islam could be seen as a clash between capitalism and different

413 views of the relationship between business and society. It’s no accident that the target was the

414 world trade symbol. My feeling was that the world needs a big dialogue on economy and

415 21st century business / society relationships.

416 At a conference on Appreciative Inquiry in Baltimore in October 2001, he

417 proposed the idea of exploring these questions and was overwhelmed by the

418 enthusiastic response. With a seed grant from CWRU, David began to explore the

419 notion of “Business as an Agent of World Beneﬁt,” using AI methods to explore how

420 and when business might operate at a higher level of consciousness and where and

421 when this might already be happening. His work began to get attention, and in 2003,

422 David designed and facilitated an historic summit for the UN General Assembly by

423 Secretary General Koﬁ Annan called the United Nations Global Impact, gathering

424 500 CEO’s from several global corporations, including Green Mountain Coffee

425 Roasters, Alcoa, Unilever, Nova Nordisk, Dutch Royal Shell, and Coca-Cola. The

426 purpose was to “unite the strengths of markets with the authority of universal ideals

427 to make globalization work for everyone.” Using the Appreciative Inquiry Summit

428 methodology, they explored the possibility that as the world transitions to a global

429 economy, business could become a positive and creative force that could lead in a

430 transition to planetary healing, create peace, and sustainable futures. They used

431 the Appreciative Inquiry method to discuss issues such as “how will we meet the

432 inclusion needs and aspirations of 3 billion middle class people arriving in the next

433 twenty to twenty-ﬁve years, without causing unsustainable overshoot beyond plan-

434 etary boundaries as well as resource wars, runaway system dynamics, depression,

435 and a world of fear where the prospects of terror and peril become part of our normal

436 existence even if only as a constant background possibility?” They shared stories and

437 dreams of possible innovations that explored ways business could be a force to

438 eradicate extreme poverty, how business could be a force for eco-innovation, how

439 business could promote world peace by creating cooperation in conﬂict zones. David

440 began to imagine a Nobel Prize for Business, how businesses and business leaders

441 could be acknowledged for advancing human well-being, advancing civil society,

442 promoting the design of digniﬁed work.

443 After the Leaders’ Summit, Cooperrider applied for and received several grants to

444 continue the global inquiry and began to obtain funds for a center for Business as an

445 Agent of World Beneﬁt (BAWB). He wrote in one of his proposals of his experience

446 of the Global Compact:

447 Business has the opportunity to be one of the most positive and creative forces on the planet,

448 and that the epic transition to a world economy of “full spectrum ﬂourishing” is no longer a

449 utopian urge or mini-trend, but an observable and remarkable trajectory. (Cooperrider, p. 2)

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450 The BAWB has since expanded as a world inquiry project and has involved a vast

451 movement to conduct interviews with business leaders who have helped create

452 innovative solutions for human betterment around the planet. Over 3,000 stories

453 have been collected. (See [http://aim2ﬂourish.com](http://aim2flourish.com/) where these innovations are

454 continually being documented). BAWB is committed to the appreciative collection

455 of stories and experiences that generate hope that capitalism can change the way we

456 live, stories about the potential to eliminate extreme poverty, creation of digniﬁed

457 work, using business as an agent for furthering eco-innovation, business as a force

458 for peace in extreme-conﬂict zones.

459 The poetry in his writing is inspirational. With stories of empowering solutions,

[AU10](#_bookmark33)

460 strengths, and system-wide breakthroughs in the room, there was a groundswell of

461 what can only be described as an emotion of *urgent optimism*. It infused an urgency

462 to act – “to stand up, step up, and scale up” as one respected CEO declared it –

463 propelled not by gloom and doom, but inspiration, opportunity and illumination. The

464 sense in the room was that “the world is getting better and better, and because it is, it

465 can ... and it must.”

466 BAWB has been devoted to collecting such stories of breakthroughs, entrepre-

467 neurial value-creation, progress in well-being, efforts to create bridges rather than

468 walls, efforts to connect strengths, resources, and talents through the force of the

469 market place. True to Suresh’s insight that questions are windows into the soul,

470 David remains intrigued by questions such as this:

[AU11](#_bookmark34)

471 What might happen for our world if everyone could see and sense its true signiﬁcance over

472 the broad sweep of history with a kind of time-lapse lens, through which the untold ‘story of

473 business’ may be placed carefully and scientiﬁcally in conjunction with the unprecedented

474 advances in humankind’s overall well-being?

475 An example of a ﬁgural story that he has shared several times involved an Israeli

476 business leader, Stef Wertheimer, and his creation of Tefen, a “capitalist kibbutz,” an

477 industrial park that has spawned 300 businesses, world class schools, hospitals,

478 museums, community meetings spaces that bring Arab and Jewish people together

479 working and living in collaboration. Tefen became an island of peace and shared

480 prosperity, a place of equality between different religious and ethnic groups, men and

481 women, in the midst of seemingly intractable conﬂict. As the businesses have

482 thrived, peace and security have increased as well. The BAWB project includes

483 stories of Unilever’s Project Shakti, the microenterprise for women in Indian vil-

484 lages. Stories such as this celebrate the role of business enterprise in increasing life

485 expectancy, reducing poverty, providing resources for education, stories of shared

486 value creation, empowerment and innovation, vision and entrepreneurship, digniﬁed

487 work, and human development.

488 Eventually BAWB morphed into the Fowler Center for Sustainable Value at

489 CWRU with the purpose of researching and disseminating innovations in sustain-

490 ability as a business opportunity. Funded by Chuck Fowler, the CEO of Fairmont

491 Minerals who had witnessed the transformational impact of an AI Summit in his

492 organization, it is devoted to Business as an Agent of World Beneﬁt and “exists to

493 advance the scholarship and practice of ﬂourishing enterprise,” linking with other

494 institutions to “create prosperity while nourishing human and natural systems

[AU12](#_bookmark35)

495 (<https://weatherhead.case.edu/centers/fowler/about/>). The center focuses on

496 for-proﬁt organizations that have devoted activities to creating value for society and

497 the environment. Appreciative Inquiry is openly acknowledged as the “primary

498 vehicle for effecting change.”

# 499 New Insights: A Positive Revolution in Change

500 It is nigh impossible to detail the wide breadth of inﬂuence that David’s work has had

501 on the ﬁeld of Organizational Change, let alone the wider body of practitioners in the

502 such ﬁelds of education, public policy, and social work. There are now two centers

503 that are devoted either to his work or to work he initiated. There are several groups

504 who offer training and certiﬁcation in Appreciative Inquiry as an intervention

505 method and countless consultants now using Appreciative Inquiry explicitly in

506 their practice. Appreciative Inquiry is regularly used in coaching, team building,

507 and in large group interventions.

508 David had a major inﬂuence on Jane Dutton and Kim Cameron when they began

509 to advance their work in Positive Organizational Scholarship at the University of

510 Michigan. Jane attended an Appreciative Inquiry workshop in the 1990s that David

511 and Diana Whitney offered in Taos New Mexico and began to consider how

512 scholarship can be an intervention in social-organizational life. Kim was the Dean

513 at Weatherhead School of Management in the 1990s and witnessed ﬁrst-hand the

514 power of AI to inspire transformational change.

515 More directly many of David’s doctoral students have gone on to make important

516 contributions. Tojo Thatchenkerry has written several books that take an apprecia-

517 tive lens, including *Appreciative Intelligence: Seeing the Mighty Oak in the Acorn*

518 (Thatchenkerry, 2006; see [http://www.appreciativeintelligence.com](http://www.appreciativeintelligence.com/)). James Ludema

519 co-authored *The Appreciative Inquiry Summit: A Practitioner*’*s Guide for Leading*

520 *Large-Scale Change* (Ludema et al., [2003](#_bookmark15)) and has gone on to create and lead an

521 innovative doctoral program at Benedictine University devoted to value-based

522 leadership. Nadya Zhexembayeva co-authored Embedded Sustainability (Laszlo &

523 Zhexembayeva, 2011) and authored *Over*ﬁ*shed Ocean Strategy: Powering Innova-*

524 *tion for a Resource-Deprived World* (Zhexembayeva, 2014). I was deeply inﬂuenced

525 by David’s friendship and thought trials throughout my time as a doctoral student

526 and in later years as a Professor. I can see traces of David’s inﬂuence in every article

527 and book I have written, particularly *Yes to the Mess: Surprising Leadership Lessons*

528 *from Jazz* (Barrett, 2012). Even though I had been a musician for years, it was only

529 because of David’s inﬂuence that I was able to notice the appreciative mindset that

530 allows improvisation to ﬂourish.

# 531 Legacies and Unfinished Business: Applying Positive Psychology

532 to Social-Organizational Change Processes

533 David is currently writing a book with Lindsey Godwin that outlines a positive

534 theory of organizational change. The title is Positive Organization Development:

[AU13](#_bookmark36)

535 Innovation Inspired Change in an Economy and Ecology of Strengths. The book

536 reviews the burgeoning ﬁeld of positive psychology and positive organizational

537 scholarship and argues that sustainable change is most likely successful when it

538 elevates and extends strengths, broadens and builds on capacity. The book docu-

539 ments several of the case studies and interventions that have been sponsored through

540 the Fowler Center, including recent efforts by the City of Cleveland to create

541 regional economic development and to create a sustainable ecology and furthering

542 positive institutions that magnify the highest human potential.

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