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Call for Articles

AIP Issue: August 2012

Editors: Jeanie Cockell and Joan McArthur-Blair

Working Title: Inclusive Spaces: Using Appreciative Processes to Transform Social Structures

Focus of the Issue

This issue will focus on how the practice of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) fosters and opens inclusive spaces in organizations of all kinds. We invite Appreciative Inquiry practitioners to share articles, stories, case studies, reflections, art, images, poetry, research, models and theory regarding creating inclusive spaces. We are particularly interested in how Appreciative Inquiry has generated those inclusive spaces with emancipatory and social justice frameworks such as transformative education or critical theory.

Challenging and Transforming Social Structures

Jeanie Cockell used AI as a research methodology for her doctoral dissertation (2005), 'Making Magic Facilitating Collaborative Processes' (available on the AI Commons). One of the primary findings of that research was the notion of 'Critical Appreciative Processes.' These processes combine Appreciative Inquiry, transformative education and critical theory. The critical element recognizes and challenges oppressive social structures and the appreciative element is the means for dialogue to transform those structures.

As both Jeanie Cockell and Joan McArthur-Blair have worked with Critical Appreciative Processes they have renamed it 'Critical Appreciative Inquiry' (CAI) to more clearly focus on the power of the inquiry. CAI attempts to blend the powerful work of AI with a deep understanding of the issues of power, privilege and diversity.

Seeking inclusion and understanding difference

These concepts from transformative education and critical theory which seek inclusion and an understanding of difference can deepen our practice of AI. **Transformative education** suggests the need for a critical lens that surfaces the impact of social structural differences on people's ability to participate and be included. Transformative education and **critical theory** recognize that we come from different social constructions based on race, gender, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, ability, religion and class; and **Appreciative Inquiry** lends itself to creating inclusive spaces where people feel respected and connected to each other.

Creating Inclusive Spaces

The editors have a passion for creating inclusive organizations and seek to engage AI practitioners to share their passions for working with AI through social justice and emancipatory lenses. One brief example of using Critical Appreciative Inquiry was facilitating 'team building' for all of the staff in an aboriginal community school. The critical piece was acknowledging the power differentials due to race. The people with positional power, the teachers, were 75% non-aboriginal and all the teaching assistants were aboriginal. After two days of Appreciative Inquiry in early September with a follow-up day in January, the teaching assistants moved from hiding in the back of the room to full engagement, speaking confidently about their views of team work at the school. All voices were now contributing to how the school could be a more inclusive space.



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Preparing Your Proposed Contribution

Here are some questions that may be useful to reflect upon as you think about your contribution to the issue.

- How and where do you practice awareness of and respect for the diversity of others?
- How do you positively address the issues of who has power?
- Who gets included in AI processes and what processes facilitate that?
- How do you create spaces that foster transformation?
- How do you use reframing and dialogue to move from a problem focus to a possibility focus when working with the profound issues of exclusion?
- What have you considered, as an AI practitioner, as you have blended critical theory and AI?
- How do you reflect on or find space for your own differences and worldviews?

Some possible topics:

1. AI and creating inclusive spaces
2. AI across differences – culture, ethnicity, gender, race, sexual orientation, ability, religion, class
3. AI and power and privilege
4. AI in highly diverse organizations
5. AI and conflict transformation
6. AI and social justice
7. AI and holistic organizations
8. Critical theory, AI and organizational change
9. Personal reflections on diversity and being an AI practitioner
10. Others related topics

Editors:

Joan McArthur-Blair is a recently retired college president who now spends her time writing, speaking and working with organizations to foster AI in their work. She grounds her AI and leadership work in her love of both reading and writing poetry.

Jeanie Cockell is president of Jeanie Cockell Consulting which specializes in organizational and educational consulting with a focus on collaborative processes. All her work is grounded in AI. She teaches AI and is the founder of the Nova Scotia AI network.

Joan and Jeanie are currently co-authoring 'Learning Magic: Appreciative Inquiry in Higher Education' to be published in 2012. Joan is also writing 'The Quivering Heart: Hope, Despair and Forgiveness in Education Leadership.'

To contribute:

We invite you to send a proposal (300 words maximum) by December 1, 2011 for the August 2012 issue of *AI Practitioner* to Joan McArthur-Blair, jmcarthur-blair@ns.sympatico.ca or Jeanie Cockell, jeanie@jeaniecockell.com

Final articles, stories, case studies, reflections, research, models and theory can range from 500 to a maximum of 2000 words. Art and diagrams should be high resolution, publication ready. Poetry should be formatted for publication.