

**The Impact of Appreciative Inquiry on Trust and Collaboration:
A practitioner research study**

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Abstract

This research project aimed to review the relationship between two student support departments pivotal to the enrollment process at an Art and Design university in the Southwestern region of the United States. The purpose of this project was to utilize the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) framework as a model for building collaboration and increasing levels of trust between these two interrelated departments. Five individuals engaged in this four-month study and participated in an Appreciative Inquiry workshop designed to reveal the positive core relationship between these two departments. The workshop functioned as a platform for dialogue between these two departments. Through conversation, members of each team sought to discover key elements to success, dream about the ideal environment, design the paradigm for this ideal environment and then commit to the destiny identified as a collective team. Participants were also asked to keep a reflective journal of team interaction after the workshop. The researcher conducted interviews with the participants, as well as monitoring interaction through the use of record sheets during meetings. Each of these data collection strategies revealed the impact of Appreciative Inquiry from both an individual and collective perspective.

The data collected during this research were analyzed to identify (a) whether there is a perceived connection between the use of AI and the development of trust, (b) whether AI contributed to a stronger sense of collaboration between these two departments, (c) whether improvements were identified, and how far those improvements in trust resulted in stronger collaborations and combined ownership for results. Throughout all data collected, three themes emerged that resonated with the participants, trust, collaboration and productivity. Based on these emergent themes, there appears to be indication of a positive relationship between the Appreciative Inquiry framework and the impact on trust and collaboration, leading to greater productivity for the five participants in this study. The applicable lessons from this project will be a resource for other higher education managers responsible for collaboration between essential student support teams.

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Glossary

Below is a list of common terms used throughout this research. These definitions are meant to provide a common understanding of each term as it is encountered throughout this thesis.

Appreciative Inquiry. The term *Appreciative Inquiry* refers to a framework designed to approach problems through an asset-based approach, as opposed to a deficit-based approach. The framework is designed to help individuals focus on a positive approach to challenges through creativity and collaboration, rather than a perspective of negativity.

Positive Lens. The term *positive lens* refers to the perspective through which an individual views an experience. Participants were encouraged to view situations through this positive lens, or with a positive perspective as part of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop.

Appreciative Inquiry Workshop. The *Appreciative Inquiry Workshop* was a full day session of dialogue with the participants. As researcher, I led the participants through the four-D cycle of discovery, dream, design, and destiny; the four key phases of the Appreciative Inquiry cycle (Cooperrider, & Whitney, 2005).

Student Service Departments. The *student services departments* is a term reflective of all service areas at the institution that assist students with the enrollment process and then continue to assist students throughout their education at the university. These departments include Admissions, Academic Advising, Registrar, Financial Aid, Student Life and Career Services. Not all departments were available to participate in this study; however, this term is used to encompass the collective service departments.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

This research was conducted at an institution with a rich 150-year history in the southwestern region of the United States. Throughout those years the institution went through numerous changes, always seeking to better serve its community constituents and ensure accessibility to a higher education. Most recently this institution has considered itself a liberal arts institution with some solid programs within the arts. Realizing the future was wrought with financial concerns, the institution attempted to broaden its audience and seek enrollments for a wide range of programs, even adding sports teams to boost enrollment.

Unfortunately, even though the institution engaged in consistently reflective behavior, eager to seek continual improvements, the institution was unable to affect the financial concerns. The institution was under extreme financial duress and desperately sought creative ways to address this crisis. After seeking assistance from the city, state, and other higher education institutions throughout the United States, a for-profit higher education organization expressed interest. This for-profit organization consists of a network of over 80 universities throughout the world. While these institutions are all owned by the same organization, each institution is autonomous and not required to transform programs as part of a franchise. Each institution is uniquely governed and has its own mission, vision and governance according to accreditation laws within each region. This for-profit higher education organization determined this institution in the Southwest of the United States to be a worthwhile investment.

While this university was not required to drastically change its identity after the change in ownership, the university was required to restructure in order to align practices with other universities within this network. Subject matter experts from one of the large online schools within this for-profit network led the university through this restructure. These subject matter experts had narrow specializations within specific operational areas. These individuals did not work in an environment that required them to collaborate between departments to address areas of potential improvement or ways to improve the student experience.

In fact, these individuals were trained to only focus on the immediate task within their direct department. This type of behavior was important in the environment of a large online organization and allowed them to identify best practices to ensure that this large online school functioned properly. While these experts were providing services that worked well in the online environment, in my experience the changes in practice did not work well within the face-to-face environment. Departments were not encouraged to collaborate and some operational areas were strongly discouraged from interacting with students in any manner.

This sort of silo behavior slowly made a severe impact on the functions within the university. I witnessed individuals and departments within the university not communicating effectively and the students were feeling the impact. In fact, the subject matter experts of the larger organization eventually declared the new practices to be mandatory and as a result, university team members were suddenly told that they were no longer permitted to collaborate with other departments, including the department that I managed at the time. This expectation prohibited the local team from defining a more effective and efficient method to ensure seamless operations for the students. The university was given a framework for productivity, which worked well in other environments, but from my perspective, was making this small university struggle to provide a successful student-centered environment. Eventually, the practices provided by the larger organization resulted in a culture of individuality that fueled a dichotomous, team versus team environment, ultimately spreading negativity and accusation throughout the university.

I believed that because of this uncooperative environment, the university had been unable to flourish. Fortunately, university leaders also saw the negative effects of these practices and fought for the institution to gain additional freedom to define internal practices. Yet, even with this new level of autonomy to own the future, I saw the institution continue to struggle. When opportunities arose for interdepartmental collaboration I continued to witness a lack of trust, which I believed led to a lack of cooperation. This lack of cooperation has been a particular issue with members of the student operation and student life teams. For example, the

enrollment team relies heavily on these administrative student support departments to assist students through the enrollment process. Each team provides vital services to assist students with difficult decisions throughout the process; including which courses to choose and which housing and meal plan options meets their needs, all ultimately leading to a financial decision. For new students, these are some of the most stressful decisions to make as these choices have a financial impact on families. The enrollment team must rely on the experts within each of these student support areas to provide a high level of customer service to the prospective families, ensuring a smooth, and stress free process in applying and determining a place to study. It is discouraging to find individuals on these teams refusing to invest effort for this prospective audience. When issues arise, individuals immediately point to a different team and blame one another, rather than take a proactive approach at identifying effective methods to address the issue at its core and meet the needs of the student.

When these two student support departments are unable to collaborate with the enrollment team and take joint ownership for the registration of qualified students, enrollment suffers, affecting the overall morale of the university as it struggles to find its foothold. Negativity continues to shadow the morale of all faculty and staff as the stress of failure fuels tempers. As an institution that is dependent on student enrollment for financial stability, the success of the new student process is essential to ensuring a seamless course for prospective families, which will ultimately affect the future stability of the institution.

As the newly appointed Director of Enrollment, I have a personal desire and a professional need to find a solution to this atmosphere of negativity and blame. If the institution is to gain any traction in enrolling qualified students, these two teams must address challenges as they arise and overcome difficulties. Ultimately, everyone on the campus plays an important role in the enrollment of new students and there should be a collective, holistic approach at attempting to seek overall improvements. It was the intention of this research project to determine if the use of the Appreciative Inquiry framework could affect trust and affect cohesion between individuals and teams in the student support functional areas.

1.2 Purpose of Study

The aim of this research was to analyze whether the use of an Appreciative Inquiry framework has any effect(s) on the development of trust and collaboration between two student support departments. This research investigated if an improvement in trust increased cross-departmental collaborations, ultimately leading to a positive impact on productivity and overall enrollment stability.

The data collected during this research were analyzed to identify (a) if there is a connection between the use of AI and the development of trust, (b) if AI has contributed to a stronger sense of collaboration between these two departments, (c) if improvements are identified, have those improvements in trust resulted in stronger collaborations and combined ownership for results. The applicable lessons obtained from this project will be a resource for other higher education managers responsible for collaboration between essential student support teams.

1.3 Practitioner Research Questions

Main Research Question:

- How does using Appreciative Inquiry impact trust and collaboration between two inter-related support groups within an Art & Design University?

Sub Questions:

- Does using the Appreciative Inquiry framework bridge teams and increase cross-departmental collaboration? If yes, in what way? If no, why not?
- Does the Appreciative Inquiry framework provide individuals with a renewed outlook and positive hope for the future of the organization?
- Does using a positive lens increase levels of trust between individual employees on various teams? If yes, in what way? If no, why not?
- What effect (if any) does increased perceptions of trust increase the positive interactions between team members?
- To what extent (if any) does positive team interaction impact overall team productivity?

During this research, I collected data from the Appreciative Inquiry workshop, a photo-elicitation exercise, post-workshop evaluation, individual interviews, journals, and record sheets to record interactions of the participants. Common themes were then identified and analyzed to determine the impact of Appreciative Inquiry on trust, collaboration and productivity.

1.4 Rationale for Study

Education has and continues to change rapidly with each new generation of student (Milliken, 2004; Bloland, 2005). These changes force educators to monitor practice to ensure that the student's needs are being met from both an administrative and academic perspective (Kondakci & Van den Broeck, 2009). In the United States, there is an intense competition to recruit and retain qualified students (Amirali & Bakken, 2015; Goralski & Tootoonchi, 2015; Singh, 2011). Prospective students are researching multiple institutions before determining their 'home' for the duration of their degree. In addition to identifying the right the program or degree, prospective students are also very interested in the safety, security, and overall student services that are provided by the institution (Amirali & Bakken, 2015; Goralski & Tootoonchi, 2015). Interestingly, the prospective students also seek opportunities to uncover this information directly from the voices of the current student population; increasingly accessible through social media (Amirali & Bakken, 2015). Knowing that prospective students are interested in the experience of the current student, institutions should recognize the importance of servicing the needs of the current student with high standards to ensure that current students are speaking positively about the institution and the student services received.

Assessment of student learning is closely monitored through program learning outcomes; however, assessment of student service receives less attention in the world of academia. If our institution is to continue to drive growth and ensure stability it is vital that all student service departments are held to a quality and level of service that is monitored and adjusted as needed. Rather than force individuals in the student service departments to meet an external expectation, this study explores the idea of individuals committing to the student's needs

through a grass roots, collaborative, and positive approach. It is expected that this approach will organically develop through the participation of employees in the student service departments in this study. By empowering these individuals to reflect on their current practice and openly identify concrete ways in which collaboration could improve, the participants have an opportunity to take ownership in a much more meaningful way. Changes in behavior are not dictated from above; rather they are explored from within.

As leader of the enrollment team, I have seen this institution struggle with collaboration and trust between departments. This struggle directly affects the enrollment process for prospective students. When members of departments are seamlessly collaborating, the student experience thrives; however, when team members lack trust and respect for one another, the student experience is hindered and often damaged. The Appreciative Inquiry framework provides a platform for discussion of sensitive topics such as trust.

It was the intention of this study to provide that platform for discussion to members of the student services departments so that these participants can identify the behaviors that members should exhibit to foster an environment of trust and collaboration. If teammates hold each other accountable for the agreed upon actions and behaviors, it was expected that the impact of the Appreciative Inquiry framework would be positive. With a positive outcome, the institution will benefit from a satisfied student population and hence directly influence the ability of the enrollment team to continue to seek enrollment growth, contributing to the overall productivity of the institution.

1.5 Thesis Structure

Following is a brief description of the content found in each chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Chapter 2 begins with an overview of the approach taken to find and review the literature for this thesis, a critique of Appreciative Inquiry as well as an explanation as to why this framework was chosen for this study. The chapter provides a detailed critique of the Appreciative Inquiry

framework. Following this critique is the exploration of literature in connection with two main themes, evidence of Appreciative Inquiry and the impact on trust, as well as evidence of the impact of trust on team development. Within each of these themes is an exploration of Appreciative Inquiry and the connection with transformational leadership, team building, organizational performance and trust. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the literature reviewed and the identification of a gap found in the literature.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

Chapter 3 begins with an overview of the aim of this research and then extends into my epistemological approach to this study. There is then a review of the methodology chosen to analyze the data and the design process taken to ensure a mixed method, sequential exploratory strategy. Embedded in this section is a review of the ethical considerations taken for this project as well as the selection of participants. Following this is a detailed account of the data collection process and the methods chosen for analysis during the two phases of data collection. Finally, the chapter ends with a review of the importance of reflexivity throughout this research.

Chapter 4 – Findings: Results and Discussion

Chapter 4 provides a detailed account of the findings from the data collected throughout this research. The chapter begins with a review of the methodology chosen to analyze the data collected (as detailed in chapter three) and then proceeds to provide an account of the activity that occurred during the two phases of the data collection period. Woven into this chapter is a discussion of the findings as they were unveiled during the research as well as a discussion of emergent themes that were prevalent in the findings.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion, Limitations and Implications for Practice

Chapter 5 begins with a review of the research questions addressed during this project, discussing the ways in which this research addressed each question. Following the research questions is a section detailing emergent new knowledge that resulted from this research.

Included in this section is a recommended model for other researchers to consider for future use. Next is a section detailing the strengths and limitations found in this research, both with participation as well as with the data collection process. Finally, the chapter concludes with a section reviewing the implications of this research on practice, recommendations for future research and a personal reflection on how I have grown personally as a practitioner researcher.

1.6 Place of Researcher within the Study

As Director of Enrollment for the university where this research was conducted, I have a strong desire to see an improvement in collaboration between the student service departments. I have been with this institution for the past 17 years and was personally affected when this institution thought it would have to close its doors. When the university was purchased by the for-profit organization there was a sense of hope and renewal; however, these feelings quickly dissipated as the mandates affected our ability to enroll new students. Rather than passively accept the current atmosphere, I prefer to rise to the challenge. I believe the individuals at this institution have the strength to overcome the current obstacles that are blocking our success. With the right tools and encouragement, individuals working in the student service departments have the potential to unify as one team and work together toward a common mission and vision for the university.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to analyze the impact of trust and collaboration between two student support departments within a university setting. I sought to investigate whether an improvement in trust would increase cross-departmental collaborations, ultimately leading to a positive impact on productivity and overall enrollment stability. There are many approaches that have been widely used throughout organizations to improve trust and build teams. In fact, a simple internet search on ‘trust and the workplace’ resulted in hundreds of articles claiming ways to improve trust between leaders and employees starting with top-level leadership. However, rather than using a top-down approach, I wanted to identify a framework that would permit individuals to organically identify ways to improve collaborations with the anticipation that this would result in an increase in trust between employees without a required mandate from the top of the organization. The employees of this university have already felt the effects of ineffective mandates from the upper levels of management and as a result, trust in these leaders and their departments are minimal.

I needed a framework that would allow employees to have their voices heard in the decision making process and help employees navigate change. Therefore, I investigated change frameworks intended to engage the staff of an organization and found approaches such as Total Quality Management, Balanced Scorecard and Appreciative Inquiry (American Society for Quality, 2014; Balanced Scorecard, 2014; Center for Appreciative Inquiry, 2011). These approaches are intended for organizations in general and are not specific to higher education. The Total Quality Management and Balanced Scorecard approaches intend to provide a holistic approach to change by involving the employees of an organization so that everyone involved with the organization has knowledge of the strategic direction of the institution and as a result can contribute to the organization’s success. These approaches are top-down approaches that start with leadership defining a process or strategy for employees of the institution and do not appear to include employees in the design process.

While both approaches work to involve employees, these approaches are not designed for an organic bottom-up approach ensuring employees are able to contribute to the strategic, decision making process. Total Quality Management, in an effort to ensure employee contribution, has designed quality circles. These quality circles allow small groups of employees, from a single team unit, to address challenges and contribute to the conversation of improvement (American Society for Quality, 2014). While this approach has been endorsed, by Total Quality Management, for improving employee morale and increasing productivity, the purpose of Total Quality Management is focused on the development and success of the business, not necessarily the professional development of the employee. Balanced Scorecard has a similar intent to improve the bottom line of an organization; however, the Balanced Scorecard approach does attempt to balance the perspective. This approach seeks to emphasize not only the financial indicators of success, but also the non-financial indicators, including customer satisfaction, operational efficiency and organizational knowledge (Balanced Score Card, 2014). The Total Quality Management and Balanced Scorecard approaches have both been criticized for the heavy focus on process and data, which does not allow for innovation nor are the approaches designed to allow for creative problem solving (Al Nofal, Al Omair & Zairi, 1999; Awadallah & Allam, 2015). While both the Total Quality Management and Balanced Scorecard approaches have attributes that align with the aim of my research, I was interested in a framework that ensured a bottom-up engagement with employees with an emphasis on the professional development of employees and teams. Therefore, the Total Quality Management and Balanced Scorecard approaches were not chosen for this study.

The Appreciative Inquiry framework takes a slightly alternative approach. With Appreciative Inquiry there is an attempt to include the employees in the decision making process through organization wide Appreciative Inquiry workshops with the intent of bringing development opportunities to employees (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, Cherney & Fry, 2004; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Center for Appreciative Inquiry, 2011; Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012). Through a series of exercises done during the workshop, individuals of an organization are empowered to recognize collective strengths and then use those strengths to define change

collaboratively as the organization collectively seeks success in performance (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, Cherney & Fry, 2004; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012). Each of these researchers are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. The approach also emphasizes historical positive successes to drive decision-making. As the institution where this research was conducted has a history of negativity between departments, the Appreciative Inquiry framework stood out as the ideal approach due to the emphasis on positivity in the change process.

However, there have been many criticisms of Appreciative Inquiry, including arguments that Appreciative Inquiry ignores problems as well as an interpretation that the approach is too gentle and cheerful in its methods for change (Coghlan, Preskill & Tzavaras Catsambas, 2003; Grant & Humphries, 2006). Bushe (2012) provided an overview of common criticisms of the framework that included an accusation of unbalance, suggesting that organizations are more likely to find solutions if there is a critique of both positive and negative situations.

In addition, Pratt (2002) claimed a need to validate negative situations in order to find positive solutions; otherwise, participants may have hidden resentment toward the process (as cited in Bushe, 2012). However, proponents of Appreciative Inquiry state that there is not a denial of negative situations; rather Appreciative Inquiry constructively approaches negativity by identifying positive ways to address the situation (Coghlan, Preskill & Tzavaras Catsambas, 2003; Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, Cherney & Fry, 2004; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012). Challenges are still identified with Appreciate Inquiry; however, rather than a negative discussion around what went wrong, the discussion is steered toward a positive discussion around what can be done to make improvements. There is not a focus on past mistakes, but rather an emphasis on future possibility. Even with the positive focus on future possibilities, negative challenges are addressed.

In addition, Golembiewski (2000) claimed that Appreciative Inquiry as a whole is not a research approach (as cited in Bushe, 2012). However, Bushe (2012) argued that Appreciative Inquiry is grounded in a social constructivist ideology and as a result is not attempting to provide a

framework for researchers to reveal 'the truth' (further discussion in chapter three). Rather, Appreciative Inquiry is a research model that is relevant to the situation to which it is applied and can provide insight into solutions for a particular situation and for a particular group of individuals (Bushe, 2012). Taking a social constructivist approach, Appreciative Inquiry allows researchers to promote dialogue and discussion around a situation, which then reveals various perspectives. Each perspective that contributes to the dialogue can offer insight into potential solutions to challenges. In spite of the critiques of this approach, it is for the emphasis on positivity and the link to my personal social constructivist epistemology (further discussion provided in chapter three) that I chose the Appreciative Inquiry approach as a framework to initiate changes in employee-driven collaboration with the anticipation that this change in collaboration will influence perceptions of trust.

Having chosen Appreciative Inquiry as the framework for this study, I proceeded with a literature review synthesizing concepts and theories specific to two key themes essential to this research: (a) Evidence of Appreciative Inquiry and the impact on trust (b) Evidence of the impact of trust on team development and collaboration. The Appreciative Inquiry framework was the foundation to this research, as it is a tool designed to guide discussion for identifying the positive core of previous success. In addition to the Appreciative Inquiry framework, I also sought to uncover literature regarding current trends in trust and collaboration from an organizational management perspective. I found literature that supported the need for organizations to strengthen trust and collaboration in order to ensure organizational effectiveness.

In this literature review, I sought to determine if the Appreciative Inquiry framework is an effective tool to consider when seeking to build trust and collaboration between departments.

2.2 Approach to reviewing the literature

I conducted searches of the literature accessing databases found through the University of Liverpool's library Discover tool to ensure a wide reach of databases. A thematic approach was used with key combination of words identified to conduct the search, including 'Appreciative

Inquiry', 'trust and teambuilding', 'Appreciative Inquiry and trust' and 'trust and collaboration'. In an effort to focus on more contemporary articles, the initial search was limited to publication years between 2009 and 2014. A second search looked for articles published between 2004 and 2008. While the intent was to conduct a structured review of literature published during these dates, the investigation of some publications lead to a cyclical review of literature as concepts and ideas emerged from the review with a few publications preceding 2004, which was to be expected as Appreciative Inquiry originated in 1987.

Early in the process, I was exposed to the Appreciative Inquiry framework and immediately began consideration of this framework for the research. Once this framework was identified, the literature review shifted toward publications explaining the concepts of this framework, as well as publications revealing the use of this framework as a tool to build trust.

As the aim of this research was to explore the connection (if any) between using Appreciative Inquiry and the development of trust, I initially focused the search on articles that directly linked Appreciative Inquiry with the concepts linked to trust, including transformational leadership, team building, organizational performance, and trust. The results produced 16 articles that directly linked Appreciative Inquiry to these components of trust. Of those 16 articles, 12 of them were published between 2009 and 2014, with four published prior to 2009.

I then conducted a search of the literature that focused on organizational health and the development of teams, while also seeking to find articles that connected the importance of trust to workplace efficiency. The results produced 32 articles that directly linked the concept of trust with organizational health and leadership trends. Many of these articles also referenced the concepts found in the Appreciative Inquiry framework as foundational to the concepts explored in these articles. Of these 32 articles, 22 were published between 2009 and 2014, with ten published prior to 2009.

In addition to the research articles, I identified three texts published between 2004 and 2012 that provided insight into the application of the Appreciative Inquiry framework. I also identified two texts published between 2010 and 2012, which centered on building trust to improve organizational performance. Online organizational websites were also referenced as these sites provided insight into applicable ways in which to apply the Appreciative Inquiry concepts in organizations. Only the articles, texts, and websites relevant to this research are reviewed in the following sections.

2.3 Reviewing the literature

2.3.1 Background of Appreciative Inquiry

The Appreciative Inquiry framework is a research approach used to identify the positive core strengths of an organization or group of individuals (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider & Godwin, 2010; Center for Appreciative Inquiry, 2011). Rather than focusing on issues or challenges that need correction, the Appreciative Inquiry framework engages in a four-phase cycle of discovering strengths, dreaming about potential, designing the ideal state, and realizing the positive destiny possible for an organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). According to Appreciative Inquiry supporters, this approach empowers individuals to recognize collective strengths and then use those strengths to inform practice, encouraging individuals to view challenges through a strengths perspective, which inspires dialog and a collaborative approach to success (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, Cherney & Fry, 2004; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012).

In their book *Appreciative Inquiry: A positive revolution in change*, Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) present three success cases from large service organizations in the United States. In each of these cases, the leaders and CEOs of these organizations attested to the impact of Appreciative Inquiry on their ability to implement positive change in each organization. Additional analysis on the effectiveness of Appreciative Inquiry on positive change is found in the thematic review of the literature below.

The concept of Appreciative Inquiry is derived from the two words used to define its framework; appreciate and inquire. To appreciate means “to value; recognizing the best in people or the world around us” and to inquire means “to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities” (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005, p. 7). The framework seeks to focus on the positive attributes that already exist while inquiring about new future possibilities. Often employees and organizations get complacent about operations and continue to function in ways that may not be efficient or effective for all departments. This framework allows individuals to come together and identify the good and effective ways of addressing an issue and then leveraging those positive methods to redesign the future and create a more effective way to interact (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, Cherney & Fry, 2004; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

At the core of this framework is the Appreciative Inquiry workshop. This workshop is typically a multi-day event that brings together employees to engage in a 4-D cycle requiring active participation from the employees. The employees chosen for the workshop is dependent on the purpose and intention of applying the Appreciative Inquiry framework at an organization. Employees chosen could include all individuals of an organization if the intent is related to redefining vision, or could include members of specific departments if the intent is related to improvements within a smaller unit of an organization. The four D’s of this framework include Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny. During the Discover stage, participants are engaged in exercises that allow for reflection in order that the participants can collectively identify the strengths of the organization from previous successes. This may be limited to a particular unit within the organization or the organization as a whole.

At the core of this phase is the appreciative interview. The appreciative interview is a concept embedded into the Appreciative Inquiry framework that is key to the discovery of employee's thoughts, ideas, and successes. The appreciative interviews are guided with explicit prompts designed to engage participants in revealing their personal experiences of success and highlight those areas that are most important to them as an employee. For example, participants may be asked to reflect on a highlight of their employment history where they were most proud of their contribution and to identify what they value most about their unique skill-set that they are able to contribute to the team. Participants are in small groups allowing for intimate conversations about their career highlights, providing a platform for nurturing conversation and the initial vulnerability required to build relationships and trust.

The next phase of the four-D cycle is to dream about the potential future of the organization or team. During this phase, the participants reflect on all of the positive strengths revealed during the appreciative interviews and dream about how to best leverage these strengths. It is truly a time for the participants to verbalize their dreams for the organization; a platform for employees to say 'I wish we could...'. It is during this stage that the participants pull together to identify a way to incorporate all positive strengths from all members, resulting in an organic bottom-up approach to exploring the future (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, Cherney & Fry, 2004; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Once these dreams have been identified, the third phase, Design, requires the participants to design a world in which these dreams have the opportunity to become reality. This results in the actual re-mapping of the organization to reflect the dreams of the employees. It may be a large systemic change to vision or mission of the organization, or it may be a smaller change to a process or policy that affects the overall functions of the organization. Participants are encouraged to think boldly and consider all options that best optimize the positive strengths that were identified during the Discovery and Dreaming phases. This is when the dream is articulated into the design and an actual plan is created that is holistically supported by the participants.

The inspiration of the dream is now developed into an actual plan to implement for the future. Depending on the intention of the workshop, participation may need to include leaders of an institution so that the dream can be executed and supported by the upper levels of leadership.

The final phase of the Appreciative Inquiry framework is the Destiny phase. It is during this phase that the participants collectively agree that the future of the organization will only be successful if there is full support of the design work that was completed during the Design phase. Originally, this phase was titled the delivery phase where implementation work was the focus. While implementation is still an essential component of this phase, the true essence of this phase is rooted in an organic support of the design that requires a true belief and commitment to the change. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) describe this as a phase where “changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized” (p. 35). This was reflective of a core desire from employees to see the organization succeed and recognizing the need for a collective commitment and collaboration to move forward toward the destiny of the organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

In most cases, the Appreciative Inquiry model has been an avenue for all employees to have their voices heard and their successes recognized. These voices become integral to the formation of the future of an organization and result in a grassroots, bottoms-up approach to the envisioning of an institution. Realizing the need to be sensitive to the employee’s voice, the role of the workshop leader in this model is to simply encourage and nurture the possibility of the future. Initiating discussion, focusing on strengths, affirming positivity, and modeling this behavior are key roles for the workshop leader in the Appreciative Inquiry framework. In addition, workshop leaders must recognize the need to navigate the climate and consider the correct path to success. The workshop leader must consistently model the concept that positive change is appreciated and is key to success (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Workshop leaders must be the guide through the four phases of the cycle, allowing employees to reflect on strengths as they consider the ideal future state and hence empower employees to embrace this perspective and focus on positive pathways to achieve this ideal state.

Workshop leaders engaged in the Appreciative Inquiry framework are those that have a leadership philosophy that embraces transformational leadership. The transformational leader is one that embraces the concept of a shared governance where individuals are offered the opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process in a trusting environment (Gardiner, 2006). This is a key attribute of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop leader, as this leader must openly and honestly foster an environment of transparency and trust in order for the framework to be effective. I personally seek to embrace the attributes of a transformational leader and it is another reason that I found the Appreciative Inquiry framework appealing. More information about the theory of transformational leadership is presented in the next section.

2.3.2 Theme 1: Evidence of Appreciative Inquiry and the impact on trust

Knowing that Appreciative Inquiry offered a framework consistent with the aim of this research and my personal epistemological view (further discussion provided in chapter three), as well as a framework that considered the voices of employees in the establishment of process, publications were then reviewed to identify if this framework has been used as a tool to improve trust between teams. As a result of the research, it was revealed that the Appreciative Inquiry framework is linked to a variety of concepts including leadership, team building, organizational performance, and trust. Following is a detailed review of the literature for each of these sub-themes.

2.3.2.a Sub-Theme 1a: Appreciative Inquiry and Transformational Leadership

As I was reviewing the literature on Appreciative Inquiry, the theory of transformational leadership surfaced as a leadership theory that most links with Appreciative Inquiry. I, therefore, chose to investigate the theory of transformational leadership and ways that this leadership style can complement the application of Appreciative Inquiry in an institution.

Transformational leadership has at its core the belief that leadership must involve more than a simple transaction between leader and employee. This leadership style requires the development of relationships, which inspires behavior and encourages an intrinsic motivation to do good work (McCaffery, 2010). Leaders who engage with this theory develop genuine relationships with their employees and seek to assist their employees in developing professionally. These leaders are interested in the future of their employees and recognize that by nurturing growth in employees, the organization will benefit. The goal of the transformational leader is to transform the motivations of employees from one of self-interest to that of an altruistic drive for the organization. According to Gardiner (2006), this is done through authenticity in both relationships and communication. Leaders must genuinely interact with employees with open communication about the institution to create an environment of transparency. In fact, transformational leadership is only successful if the leader establishes trust through transparency. By transparently modeling the behavior they wish to develop in their employees, leaders establish trust. When employees see leader's actions reflecting the verbal directives, trust develops as employees' sense honesty in their leaders (Gardiner, 2006; Lencioni, 2012). Lencioni (2012), an American business writer and consultant known for his theories around team management and organizational health, has stated that building trust between employees is vital to organizational success. Trust then is considered to be the foundation to collaboration and cohesion within the workplace and is best fostered through the theories embedded in transformational leadership.

Through the review, I identified two articles that presented a literature review detailing the effectiveness of transformational leadership in comparison to other leadership methods. Tyssen, Wald, and Spieth (2014) compared the effectiveness of transactional versus transformational leadership in temporary organizations. Gardiner (2006) compared the effectiveness of transactional, transformational, and transcendent leadership in light of shared governance. For clarity, I have added a brief summary of the additional leadership models that were discussed in comparison to transformational leadership, which has been described above.

Transactional leadership is best described as a transaction between leader and employee where the leader offers a reward in exchange for good work; whereas transcendent leadership is very similar to transformational leadership, yet takes the motivation one-step beyond the workplace and leverages motivation in light of the potential impact on the world (Gardiner, 2006).

These authors (Gardiner, 2006; Tyssen, Wald, & Spieth, 2014) reviewed the leadership styles in light of the concepts of temporary organizations and shared governance. A temporary organization is a group of people briefly collaborating with a shared purpose. Shared governance is a decision-making process that includes the perspectives of a broad range of employees, the opposite of a top-down decision-making process. Temporary organizations and shared governance are linked concepts both required for effective decision-making within organizations. The concepts of the temporary organizations and shared governance reflect the ever-changing environment within institutions. This is true of both the constant shift in employees, but also the constant change in the environment. For example, higher education must make decisions at a rapid pace to meet the demands of the student in an environment of choice. This may result in decisions that require a group of employees across functional areas to come together to address a process or policy change. These individuals may not work together on a daily basis, but will come together as a temporary task force, or a temporary organization, within the greater institution, requiring shared governance to make effective decisions. These types of temporary organizations requiring shared governance are also found throughout the ebb and flow of business needs. For example, in my organization, the enrollment cycle is one that requires collaboration with various departments throughout the enrollment process. At each of the stages in the cycle, there is a temporary organization developed that requires collaboration and shared decisions to meet the student's needs.

As the transformational leadership style works to establish trust between employee and leader, Tyssen, Wald and Spieth (2014) find this theory to be the most effective in this type of ever changing fluid environment.

With transformational leadership, employees are motivated to make effective decisions in line with the organization and even in the midst of rapidly changing environments, the purpose remains organizationally driven, rather than personally driven. However, according to Gardiner (2006) transcendent leadership pushes employee motivation one-step beyond transformation to a superior motivation beyond the organization and is the most effective form of leadership in this type of environment. The differences between transformational and transcendent leadership styles are quite small. Both styles recognize the need to build transparent, trusting relationships between leader and employee through inclusive, open communication and collaboration with the aim of shifting the employee's motivation from self to that of something beyond self, toward the betterment of the organization. However, transcendent leadership takes this one-step further and claims to shift employee motivation beyond the advancement of the organization and toward the actual improvement of the world. This type of leadership style may be effective in an organization with a utopian vision of religious or world peace; however, I would argue that a transformational leadership style would influence employee productivity and engagement to an effective level for most organizations.

While both literature review articles offered sound theoretical concepts around leadership styles, there were limitations with both articles. Both articles compared leadership styles based on the theoretical concepts of a temporary organization and shared governance. The assumption of effectiveness for each of these leadership styles was not applied in practice in a temporary organization nor in an environment requiring shared governance. Future research for these leadership styles should include the testing of these assumptions in an actual organizational environment. In addition, the concept of a transcendent leadership style assumes employees have an intrinsic desire to affect the whole of humanity and the world. While these are very admirable traits, I would argue that they are too theoretical and do not provide an immediate gratification for the employee.

While transformational leadership also encourages the motivation of employees beyond self, in contrast to transcendent leadership, the transformational style permits employees to see immediately the impact of those decisions within the organization as the institution moves forward toward success and is therefore more likely to be the successful leadership style.

While these articles provided an excellent review of the theoretical concepts of each leadership style, they did not link these leadership styles directly with the Appreciative Inquiry framework. Based on a thorough search of the literature, I was unable to locate any evidence of transformational leadership or any other leadership philosophy tested in an organization in light of Appreciative Inquiry. However, as the transformational leader is seeking to elicit positive motivations within employees, this leadership theory is identified as one that best links to Appreciative Inquiry. Tyssen, Wald, and Spieth (2014) recognize transformational leader's ability to shift an employee's perceptions toward positivity in an organization. Similarly, the framework of Appreciative Inquiry seeks to engage employees in a way that references the positive successes of the past to shift the perceptions of the future. Through Appreciative Inquiry, employees are motivated to recognize collective strengths and to collaborate with others in order to move the organization toward a shared vision of the future. As with the transformational leader, the leader in the Appreciative Inquiry model must encourage dialogue, focus on strengths, affirm positivity and model this behavior in order to ensure transparency, which ultimately leads to a trusting environment within the organization.

2.3.2.b Sub-Theme 1b: Appreciative Inquiry and Teambuilding

As one of the aims of this research was to identify if Appreciative Inquiry has an impact on team development, the next concept that I researched was evidence of the Appreciative Inquiry framework used as a method of building team cohesion. Five articles were identified; three with research taking place in the United States, one in Denmark, and one of the articles did not indicate the location of the research. Three articles used concepts of Appreciative Inquiry as a method to improve team cohesion and two of the articles used concepts to evaluate team performance.

Team Cohesion

Of the three articles that explicitly used the Appreciative Inquiry framework as a tool to develop team cohesion, one was a case study, while the other two were reflective accounts. Calabrese, Cohen and Miller (2013) conducted a case study of individuals working in a public-service organization in the United States (n= 9). The individuals working at this organization consistently expressed dissatisfaction with the work they were doing as well as the clients they were assisting. When a new leader joined the organization, the leader realized quickly that in order for this unit to function cohesively, they must shift the culture from the negative to the positive. The leader asked nine managers and leaders of the 70 employees to engage in the 4D cycle of Appreciative Inquiry as a method to redefine a negative environment into a positive environment. These individuals were chosen due to their managerial and leadership roles in the organization. After a four-day workshop, dedicating each day to one phase of the 4D cycle, the participants began to recognize the positive attributes of each team member and the positive impact of their work for their clients. The workshop ended with a renewed dedication to collaborate as a team and focus on respectful interaction amongst each other and their clients.

The researchers (Calabrese, Cohen & Miller, 2013) identified positive effects from using the Appreciative Inquiry framework with a dysfunctional team to truly transform and build the team into a cohesive unit. While the participant group was small, due to the managerial role of each participant, the effects of the Appreciative Inquiry framework multiplied throughout the rest of the organization. As these participants took steps to focus on positivity and transparency, these actions were modeled for others to observe and emulate; ultimately influencing the entire organization. In addition, the researchers (Calabrese, Cohen & Miller, 2013) took the time to analyze the effectiveness of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop six months later to determine if the initial impact was still evident. Based on informal conversations and email, the researchers were satisfied with the lasting positive effects.

Based on these informal conversations, the researchers determined that the participants continued to have a positive perspective about their work and their teammates. The team continued to have regular meetings where transparent conversations took place as the teammates held each other accountable to the goals identified in the Appreciative Inquiry workshop. Further analysis should include formal data collection after the workshop at multiple intervals to analyze thoroughly the lasting effects of the workshop. With additional analysis in the future, the researchers could also attempt to identify factors that may or may not influence the continued effects, such as changes in leadership or changes in teammates. The researchers attempted to analyze the lasting effects at six months; however, they relied on informal conversations and did not present a thorough analysis of data. Administering a survey rather than relying on informal comments would add to the validity of this research.

The remaining two articles reviewed were both reflective accounts of the impact of Appreciative Inquiry on teambuilding. Johnson (2010) authored a reflective account of how he, as a teacher, used Appreciative Inquiry in a classroom to build team cohesion among the students, location unknown, whereas Sloth and Hornstrup (2010) provided a reflective account of their attempt to use Appreciative Inquiry as a method to build a team within a hospital unit in Denmark. Johnson did not engage in a workshop to bring participants through the 4D cycle of the Appreciative Inquiry framework. Rather, as an instructor, he recognized a lack of cohesion in his classroom and then utilized concepts of Appreciative Inquiry to incorporate into a teambuilding exercise. Through role-play, he modeled how to interact with classmates using an appreciative, positive perspective, even with difficult topics or in cases of extreme disagreement. Sloth and Hornstrup (2010) did engage in a portion of the 4D cycle of the Appreciative Inquiry framework. The authors, knowing the importance of team cohesion and the impact of a positive perspective, asked participants to engage in the first phase of the workshop as an introduction to discovering the positive factors that motivate the team to share ownership for results.

The results of the role-play described by Johnson (2010) were positive and students thanked him for the education on methods to ensure positive engagement between individuals. The initial results of the first phase of the 4D workshop as described by Sloth and Hornstrup (2010) did not proceed as expected with participants continuing to verbalize negativity and dismiss the purpose of the workshop. However, the leaders were able slowly to shift the attention from negative experiences of the past toward a positive vision of the future. Through the reflective process, all authors (Johnson, 2010; Sloth & Hornstrup, 2010) identified the concrete steps taken that resulted in each of these positive outcomes; including modeling expected behavior, engaging in transparent communication and beginning discussions with topics that are not sensitive in nature.

All three of these articles, including the case study and both reflective accounts, provided evidence that the Appreciative Inquiry framework has the potential to make an impact on team building. However, each of these research projects was limited in longevity. The analysis was done in the moment with a limited follow-up to ensure the concepts were fully embraced by the participants. While the researchers of the case study were able to conduct a six -month follow-up, there was no additional review to ensure the concepts learned continued to influence the team positively. In addition, the reflective accounts only provided insight into the immediate effectiveness of the Appreciative Inquiry concepts without a review of the lasting effects. One reflective account (Johnson, 2010) only provided a snapshot of the effects of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) in practice based on a single class that was meeting for a limited period. Evaluating if the lessons learned through the AI role-play and a single phase of the 4D cycle were continually practiced by the participants in a variety of situations and with a variety of individuals would be required to know the lasting effects of Appreciative Inquiry.

Team Performance

Two of the five articles that referenced team performance focused on the evaluation of team performance versus the evaluation of team building, based on common concepts from the Appreciative Inquiry model. The following articles are quantitative reviews of effective team performance based on concepts of the Appreciative Inquiry model. I found limited evidence of quantitative methods used in conjunction with Appreciative Inquiry. Due to the design of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop and the interaction required between participants, many researchers take a qualitative approach to using Appreciative Inquiry. These studies (Mehra, Smith, Dixon & Robertson, 2006; Yang & Choi, 2009) were unique in their use of quantitative reviews.

Mehra, Smith, Dixon and Robertson (2006) provided a quantitative study of the effect of distributed leadership on team performance within the Midwestern region of the United States, whereas Yang and Choi (2009) provided a quantitative study of the effect of empowerment on team performance within cities across the entire United States. While neither article directly referenced Appreciative Inquiry, the concepts discussed in each of these articles align closely with the concept of empowerment and shared governance found in the Appreciative Inquiry framework. Appreciative Inquiry emphasizes a collaborative approach to engagement and as a result, participants are empowered to identify positive ways to approach the future. In fact, one of the main tenets of Appreciative Inquiry is rooted in the idea that employees must be empowered to design the future destiny of the organization or team.

Mehra, et al. (2006) describes the concept of distributed leadership as leadership that is shared among many leaders. With shared leadership comes an increase in the sharing of information, which in theory then results in improvements in team performance. When leadership is perceived to be distributed, all members of the team have an opportunity to become a voice in the decision-making process.

Through a survey conducted among work teams (n=28 teams, 336 total participants, 90% response rate) in a sales environment, it was identified that distributed leadership has a positive effect on team performance if the leadership is coordinated and not fragmented. In other words, distributed leaders must be able to engage cooperatively amongst one another in order for the sharing of leadership, and hence sharing of decisions, to be effective. The researchers (Mehra et al., 2006) specified that any individual could be perceived as a leader based on their actions. This was done to ensure that participants were able to extend beyond the traditional concepts of a leader as they answered the survey. Yang and Choi (2009) did not describe leadership effects on team performance, but rather described four dimensions of employee empowerment that affect the sharing of effective decision-making through a survey conducted among government employees (n= 176). These four dimensions of employee empowerment include autonomy, responsibility, information, and creativity. Yang and Choi (2009) claim that it is through these four essential elements that individuals truly have a sense of empowerment within the workplace where there is an opportunity to impact the decision-making process. The survey was administered to government employees in 24 different cities across the United States that were identified as having self-managed work teams. Surveys were mailed to 360 employees with 176 individual respondents, a satisfactory total response rate of 48.9%. Through the survey, the researchers (Yang & Choi, 2009) verified that empowerment is indeed comprised of each of those four elements and that each element had a positive relationship to the performance of the team.

While neither of these studies directly used the Appreciative Inquiry framework, they both linked concepts of Appreciative Inquiry with positive team performance. However, due to the number of unidentified variables, this research could not directly link performance with distributed leadership or empowerment. While in both cases a relationship was identified linking these shared concepts of Appreciative Inquiry with team performance, further research would need to be conducted in order to analyze a much wider range of factors that contribute to team performance.

Future research should include the study of variables such as leadership styles, the longevity of the team and the effects, if any, on team performance when these variables change. In addition, both studies relied on the self-reported answers to a survey and did not include any interviews with the participants. Future research could include follow-up interviews to add a deeper qualitative component and therefore, provide a mixed method approach to validate the survey responses.

2.3.2.c Sub -Theme 1c: Appreciative Inquiry and Organizational Performance

While the previous section identified the impact of Appreciative Inquiry concepts on team performance, this next section takes a broader look at the impact on organizational performance. These concepts are closely linked as each concept looks to identify factors that lead to efficiency in performance, either at a team level or at the larger organizational level. This section focuses on concepts regarding performance at the larger organizational level and suggested methods that focus on positivity as necessary to ensure advancements in performance. Two articles were found that explicitly identify Appreciative Inquiry as a positivity method to consider when seeking to improve organizational performance.

Cameron, Mora, Leutscher and Calarco (2011) researched the effectiveness of positivity on organizational effectiveness within the United States. There has been much research conducted at an individual level regarding the effect of positivity on individual performance; however, these researchers recognized a need to expand beyond individual result and determine if there is an impact on the larger organization's performance. Cameron et al. (2011) conducted a quantitative study by administering a five scale Likert survey to participants in both the finance sector (n=1989, 83% response rate) and the health sector (n=315, 33% response rate). Speculation regarding the difference in response rate was not detailed in this research; however, the researchers did recognize that the sample sizes were small for the health sector, which limited confidence in the conclusions drawn. Though the survey was not piloted, the survey was analyzed using exploratory factor analysis and was therefore deemed reliable by the researchers (Cameron et al., 2011).

Through the survey, the researchers were able to identify the degree to which employees agreed or disagreed with questions about positive practices and the impact on organizational effectiveness. The finance sector was chosen because it was perceived to be a type of environment that is less focused on positivity and more focused on financial gain. In contrast, the health sector was chosen as a field that traditionally focuses on positive outcomes for patients. The survey identified six areas of positive practices, including caring, compassionate support, forgiveness, inspiration, meaning, and respect/integrity. In all cases for both environments, it was determined that there is a correlation between these six aspects of positivity and organizational effectiveness. With an environment of positivity, employees are more likely to establish meaningful relationships with their peers, which results in building social capital. This social capital, in turn, creates a positive organizational climate. The positive organizational climate then results in greater organizational effectiveness.

The authors (Cameron et al., 2011) indicated Appreciative Inquiry as a model to establish positivity within an organization; however, they did not test the effectiveness of AI because the intention of this research was to identify if indeed positivity had an impact on organizational effectiveness. Even though Appreciative Inquiry was not tested as a model to foster positivity, the concepts of positivity discussed by the authors are directly linked to the very core concept of Appreciative Inquiry, which is to build employee satisfaction through a strengths-based positive outlook. The authors recognized that future research in this area should include a qualitative portion to gain further descriptive insight into the effects of these positive practices (Cameron et al., 2011). In fact, the low response rate from the health care sector may be reflective of the culture within the health care environment. The culture of this environment may have increased participation if the data were collected through qualitative approaches, such as interviews, which would allow the participants an opportunity to share their insights through a method they may find to be more comfortable and aligned with their chosen profession.

The second article that referenced Appreciative Inquiry as a positivity model was a literature review, conducted by Karakas (2009), of what organizational development means in the 21st century. The premise of this review is that due to a shift in the consumer environment, traditional organizational development models are outdated and do not equip managers to maneuver through the fluidity of the 21st century. No longer is organizational development's focus on an outward look toward competitive advantage, rather there is an inward recognition that organizations must have the internal ability to manage flexibly through rapid change in order to address the uncertainty of the current environment. The researcher did not explicitly state this to be true for higher education. However, institutions of higher education are organizations and the applications of these theories are generalizable to the higher education environment. Institutions must be internally equipped to manage employees in a mode that meets their needs, which as a result will deepen an employee's desire to move the organization forward creatively. Karakas (2009) describes Appreciative Inquiry as one model that is a useful tool for organizational development in the 21st century. Drawing on the core of positivity, this model engages employees in a manner that fosters creative change through a positive perspective. Organizations must invest in manager development in order to ensure leaders have the required skillset to encourage collaborative decision-making, which in turn will result in a greater commitment to execute and a positive impact on the organization's performance (Karakas, 2009).

While neither of these researchers tested the effectiveness of the Appreciative Inquiry model on organizational performance, both authors recognized the importance of positivity in moving an institution forward. I was unable to locate any research conducted directly examining the effectiveness of Appreciative Inquiry on organizational performance. Future research should consider directly examining the impact of Appreciative Inquiry on organizational performance and the lasting effectiveness of this model on the overall performance of an organization.

2.3.2.d Sub-Theme 1d: Appreciative Inquiry and Trust

As stated earlier, Appreciative Inquiry was often used as a tool to reinvigorate or redefine the mission, vision or strategic plan of an institution, or a department within the institution, for example, a nursing division within a larger university (Keefe & Pesut, 2004; Clarke, Werestiuk, Schoffner, Gerard, Swan, Jackson, Steeves & Probizanski, 2012; Harmon, Fontaine, Plews-Ogan & Williams, 2012). In each of these cases, the Appreciative Inquiry framework served to allow employees a voice to contribute to the future of the organization by redefining the mission, vision or strategic plan of the institution. In each case, the empowerment of the employees resulted in full support and collaboration from the participants to see the concepts and ideas developed from the workshop into action. While there was an implied impact on trust between individuals, these cases did not intentionally use the framework as a tool to develop trust. Even though improvements in trust were a byproduct of the intended purpose for these organizations, it is worth analyzing additional research to uncover how the Appreciative Inquiry framework may be used to impact trust. This next section will highlight three articles linking Appreciative Inquiry with the development of trust. Two of the articles, in particular, recognized the impact on trust and the importance trust has within the workplace as a byproduct of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop with the third account a deliberate attempt to use the framework as a tool to improve trust.

Keefe and Pesut (2004) presented a reflective account of one leader's use of Appreciative Inquiry to assist in the transition of her new role as Dean of a nursing school at a state university within the United States. This Dean aware of the ever-changing environment within higher education recognized the difficulty of maneuvering through constant change. Therefore, she determined to use the Appreciative Inquiry framework as a tool to give her new employees a voice as she transitioned into her role. Keefe and Pesut (2004) mention that new leaders enter into an environment and make declarations of change without permitting employees an opportunity to share their insight. In an attempt to avoid this type of negative entrance as the new leader, the Dean led faculty, staff and administration on a yearlong journey through the 4D cycle of Appreciative Inquiry.

The Dean introduced the concept of AI early in her tenure and used the framework to guide the team to co-create a new strategic vision for the school of nursing over the course of many months. This slow and methodical approach to engaging in Appreciative Inquiry allowed all members of the college a voice in the process as she patiently encouraged their participation in the creation of the vision. The results were positive with employees trusting the strategic direction created through the process and as a result, trusting her as their leader. Many researchers (Sloth & Hornstrup, 2010; Clarke, Werestiuk, Schoffner, Gerard, Swan, Jackson, Steeves & Probizanski, 2012; Harmon, Fontaine, Plews-Ogan & Williams, 2012; Calabrese, Cohen & Miller, 2013) have written about the effectiveness of Appreciative Inquiry after conducting the AI workshop and evaluating the effects of the framework. However, using this framework as an overarching way of interacting with employees is a unique use of the tool and suggests that leaders can use this as a theoretical approach to managing change and building trust between employee and leader.

The second article that recognized the unintentional impact on trust through the use of AI was the action research project presented by Clarke et al. (2012), which took place in a health care facility among nurses in Canada (n=37). This action research project intended to take participants through the Appreciative Inquiry workshop as a positive way to examine the effectiveness of the patient - nurse handoffs during transitional periods. Rather than focus on gaps in process that were not working, the researchers chose the AI framework to ensure nurses were focused on identifying what worked best in order to capture those practices. Throughout all phases of the workshop, the participants (n=37) brought up the need for trust. There is a need for the patient to trust the nurse and there is a need for the nurse to trust his or her patient in the care of someone else. When a poor hand-off between nurses takes place, there is an immediate instinctive reaction to blame co-workers, which quickly results in mistrust. The researchers used the information discussed throughout the workshop to help participants design a future process for patient hand-offs that would ensure transparent communication and hence a successful hand-off.

The design created during the Appreciative Inquiry workshop was implemented immediately and the initial effect appeared to be positive as the nurses expressed sincere satisfaction in the improvements found with levels of trust between colleagues. The researchers stated that future analysis would include a survey designed to measure continued levels of satisfaction with the new process and the impact on trust between nurses. The intention of utilizing this framework was not to build trust; however, through the process of engaging in the 4D cycle, the researchers quickly recognized trust as the key component to the success of the team. This indicates that the Appreciative Inquiry framework seems to be a useful tool to increase trust.

The final article details an account that explicitly utilized the Appreciative Inquiry framework with the intention to build trust. Miller, Fitzgerald, Preston and Murrell (2002) researched the use of Appreciative Inquiry as a tool to build mutually trusting relationships. They conducted their research with an organization in India that recently entered into a partnership with another company. The norms of operating were unique to each organization and as a result, the teams were not effectively collaborating or communicating with one another. The organizations were simply not functioning well as a single unit, causing a lack of performance for the newly formed alliance. Recognizing a lack of trust and understanding between employees at each organization, the researchers sought to develop the relational capital between employees using Appreciative Inquiry. Miller et al.'s (2002) intent was to determine if Appreciative Inquiry would increase levels of trust between the two organizations and thereby result in greater levels of collaboration. The case study included a triangulation of data through an inter-rater reliability design to ensure agreement of analysis among the researchers and increase the validity of the analysis. This design included data from pre/post questionnaires following an Appreciative Inquiry intervention (what other researchers have titled a workshop or summit), which included a total of 44 participants, with equal representation from each organization, a follow-up survey four months after the AI intervention (n=44) to determine the longevity effects, and reflective notes from the researchers.

It was determined that the participants in the Appreciative Inquiry intervention session all reported higher levels of mutual trust between employees at each organization, with the perception of mutual trust continuing four months post intervention. The authors recognized that as a case study, it may be difficult to generalize the findings to other situations; however, this research does support the theory that Appreciative Inquiry is effective as a tool to improve trust between individuals. While only one of the three articles explicitly intended to research the effects of Appreciative Inquiry on levels of trust, the results were clear. Trust is essential.

This section reviewed the impact of Appreciative Inquiry on trust by diving into concepts around leadership, teambuilding and organizational performance, all with the common thread of trust. Whether through the intentional transparency of the transformational leader or through the intentional empowerment of employees in the decision-making process, trust emerged as a required ingredient for the overall positive performance of an organization.

2.3.3 Theme 2: Evidence of the impact of trust on team development and collaboration

The first portion of the literature review identified evidence of Appreciative Inquiry being used as a tool to guide leaders, build a team, improve overall organizational performance, and to increase trust. The next section reviews the concept of trust as an essential element in how teams develop and collaborate within an organization, as well as the role of leader in the development of trust. When teams are developed and functioning well within, the team can then work collaboratively throughout the organization, with the expectation that there will then be an increase in organizational productivity. Trust leads to team development and team development leads to wider collaboration.

Trust is a subjective concept that requires some definition of common understanding. According to the Merriam-Webster (2015) dictionary, trust is the belief that someone or something is reliable, good, honest, and effective. How that definition of trust impacts an organization has been widely researched (Blomqvist, 1997; Shockley-Zalabak, Morreale, Hackman, 2010; Jiang & Probst, 2015; Boies, Fiset, Gill, 2015; Pettersen Buvik, Rolfsen, 2015;

Cuevas, Julkunen, Gabrielsson, 2015). Each of these researchers agrees that trust is the core ingredient to employee job satisfaction, which then leads to the overall organizational success and productivity.

In 1997, Blomqvist attempted to take an interdisciplinary approach to presenting an organizational concept of trust based on the common understanding of trust from a social psychology, economics, and philosophical approach. After presenting each of these various views on trust, Blomqvist (1997) identified the common core beliefs about trust. In general, these various disciplines agree that trust is a part of almost all human interactions and that trust grows as relationships develop. In addition, each of these approaches recognized that trust, ultimately, is based on an expectation of the future. Individuals who trust are expecting another individual to deliver on a promise at some point in the future. Blomqvist (1997) recognized this trust in future behavior to be a cyclical concept as trust breeds additional trust. In contrast, if a promise is not delivered, then trust turns into distrust, which then breeds additional distrust. Blomqvist (1997) sought to present a collective concept of trust that embraced the understandings from a social psychology, economics, and philosophical approach and did not intend to provide potential solutions to build trust after it has been broken. Taking this common understanding of trust into the organization is necessary to identify concrete ways to improve the climate of trust. Trust as a component of human engagement is often discussed in terms of personal relationships; however, this same component of human engagement is reflective of all relationships, whether personal or professional (Blomqvist, 1997). In fact, researchers often list trust as the foundational ingredient to effective team interaction, which ultimately leads to overall organizational productivity (Gardiner, 2006; Tracy, 2010; McCaffery, 2010; Harmon, 2013; Calabrese, Cohen, and Miller, 2013). Following is the review of research that has been conducted specifically identifying the importance of a climate of trust on the productivity of an organization.

2.3.3.a Sub-Theme 2a: Trust Climates in Organizations

Jiang and Probst (2015) as well as, Pettersen Buvik and Rolfsen (2015) studied the existence of trust climates in organizations and recognized that a positive trust climate can lead to greater levels of job satisfaction and productivity. Jiang and Probst (2015) sought to conduct a study to determine if trust climates should be considered when attempting to affect the overall trust in an organization. They collected data through a survey from 468 faculties representing 41 departments at a large university in the United States. The survey sought to identify if individual levels of trust were actually impacted by the overall climate of trust within the organization. The study found that climates of trust do indeed influence the group's perception of trust in management, even if individual level trust is low. In addition, when the group's perception, or climate of trust, is high, the individual is more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction even if their individual level of trust is low (Jiang & Probst, 2015). This is important to leaders as it speaks to the importance of establishing a climate of trust within their teams in order to combat low levels of individual trust.

Similarly, Pettersen Buvik and Rolfsen (2015) conducted a single case-study to evaluate a climate of trust when individuals have 'prior ties' in the formation of temporary project teams. Prior ties are simply defined as a prior connection to individuals working together. Based on this single case-study, it was determined that prior ties have a positive relationship when establishing a common understanding of purpose and role expectations, as well as clear and open communication, which then leads to trust. Pettersen Buvik and Rolfsen (2015) recognized that communication and trust have a cyclical relationship where communication leads to trust, which then leads to more communication and then more trust. The climate of trust in this study was based on a prior connection of the individuals working in a project team and due to this prior connection; there was an increase in communication, which continued to foster the climate of trust. The most glaring limitation to this study was that the research was only focused on positive prior ties. The researchers acknowledged that negative prior ties could have had a negative impact on the climate of trust on the project team, also supported by Blomqvist's (1997) recognition that distrust breeds additional distrust. However, the study did not include an analysis on negative prior ties and this type of analysis was recommended for

future research. Both Jiang and Probst (2015) and Pettersen Buvik and Rolfsen's (2015) research concluded that a climate of trust to be essential to job satisfaction as well as communication leading to productivity on project teams. This research suggests that leaders should find ways to establish a climate of trust with teams.

I found the work of Cuevas, Julkenen and Gabrielsson (2015) to also contribute to the importance of establishing a climate of trust in an organization. The focus of their study was to identify the role of goal congruence, or the pursuit of a common goal, in the development of a trusting climate. This case study was conducted with two organizations that are dependent on another division within the organization. One was a retail organization that was dependent on the outlet branch and the other was an aerospace company that was dependent on the supplier. In each of these cases, the success of the organization is dependent on the interaction between the divisions. Cuevas, Julkenen, and Gabrielsson (2015) found that in the case of the retail organization there was a common understanding of a big -picture goal of the organization that was driving all activity and ultimately led to the development of trust. This big-picture goal was the consumer. Leaders reinforced the goal congruence between the divisions and emphasized that all work was being done with the common goal of making the consumer satisfied. The aerospace company had goals identified within departments, but there was no overarching goal that brought the suppliers and the company in alignment and consequently, there was evidence that there was trust within a division, but not across divisions. This resulted in a lack of trust between these divisions, which was affecting the productivity of this organization. Cuevas, Julkenen and Gabrielsson (2015) identified that goal congruence was the key to fostering collaboration and strengthening alignment between the divisions in these organizations. In this study, goal congruence led to the development of trust, which in turn led to higher productivity. I found this study of particular interest as the instigation of my own research was based on a disconnection between departments and the need for departments to collaborate in order for the organization to find success. This supports my aim to explore the impact of Appreciative Inquiry on the development of trust and the development of team collaborations.

2.3.3.b Sub Theme 2b: Trust and Collaboration

Climates of trust can only begin with the development of healthy relationships (Lencioni, 2012). Healthy relationships develop through collaboration as individuals share ideas in an environment of honesty, transparency and vulnerability (Lencioni, 2012).

After reviewing many articles regarding vulnerability, I have determined that the theoretical framework of trust as presented by Nienaber, Hofeditz, and Romeike (2015) aligns closely with the concepts presented by Lencioni (2012) and with the overall aim of my research. Nienaber, Hofeditz, and Romeike (2015) conducted a literature review of research that links vulnerability and trust between leaders and followers. The categories of research they included were limited to management, psychology, and behavioral sciences. Within this literature review, the researchers then carefully narrowed the review to literature that directly linked trust and vulnerability, literature that had academic rigor and literature that was generalizable to a broad audience. As a result of the review, the researchers determined that trust is built between leader and follower through vulnerability. The key to this framework requires the leader to act on this concept and take actions that truly model vulnerability. It is only when the actions are visible, that followers believe in the vulnerability and healthy relationships are built around trust. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, vulnerability is defined as “capable of being physically or emotionally wounded; open to attack or damage” (January 31, 2016). In terms of relationships between leader and employee, this equates to a willingness to accept and own mistakes, which according to La Pla (2012), is one of the key behavioral traits of leaders who gain trust. Trust is dependent upon a willingness to own mistakes humbly, which as a leader, can feel as though one is opening themselves up to criticism (La Pla, 2012). This humble willingness to be critiqued defines vulnerability in leaders. In addition, Burke, Sims, Lazzara, and Salas (2007) recognize that vulnerability also requires leaders to accept a risk with the relationships that they develop with an expectation that a positive and healthy result will occur.

Lencioni (2012) extends this concept of healthy relationships through vulnerability by linking healthy relationships to healthy organizations. In fact, according to Lencioni (2012) organizations will only see success if they focus inwardly and develop a culture of trust, starting with top leadership. It is only when leaders vulnerably interact with one another that these qualities of trust are imparted into the rest of the organization.

Lencioni (2012) encourages leaders to consider engaging in a behavioral profiling tool when developing a culture of trust. These types of behavioral profiling tools uncover the ways in which individuals prefer to communicate, learn and interact socially. By unveiling these preferences, individuals vulnerably expose their strengths and weaknesses in each area. With this deeper understanding, colleagues tend to have increased levels of empathy. With this type of empathetic understanding, negative interaction is avoided as individuals recognize the strengths and weaknesses of one another on a human level. When the leadership of an organization can create a culture of honesty and transparency through vulnerable interaction, then trust is born. These concepts align directly with the previous review of transformational leadership as described by both McCaffery (2010) and Gardiner (2006).

With the establishment of trust, a platform for open dialog is created ensuring a fertile environment for successful collaboration allowing individuals the freedom to offer creative solutions without judgment. Taylor (2007) agrees that relationships rooted in trust permit individuals to have an open dialogue, which results in a common understanding of goals. The nurturing of healthy relationships continues in the workplace when ideas are valued and individuals are recognized for their contributions. In fact, when individuals feel as though they are contributing to, and actively engaged in, the decision-making process, then there is an increase in team collaboration and overall organizational performance (Lencioni, 2012; Yang & Choi, 2009).

2.3.3.c Sub-Theme 2c: Trust and Leadership

The third sub-theme that emerged from the literature review centered on the role of leaders and the development of trust. Argyris (2002a), who has written extensively about organizational change (Argyris, 2002b; Argyris & Crossan, 2003; Argyris, 2004; Argyris, 2010) agrees that environments of trust must begin with leaders modeling expectations, as through transformational leadership, and adds the expectation that leaders must actively engage in self-reflection.

Transforming a culture of negativity by developing trust and improving collaboration is not an automatic endeavor and requires purposeful interaction between leaders and employees. Being able to self-reflect critically on interactions ensures that leaders are consistently self-monitoring their behavior and are able to evaluate the impact of the behavior on members of the team. Often leaders are trapped addressing issues through what Argyris (2002a) has termed single loop learning. Single loop learning is a reactionary response to an issue that has been used in prior situations. The assumption is that the auto-response that has worked in a different situation will produce a similar, desired result. When that auto-response fails to produce the desired result, individuals must consider a new way to address the issue through what Argyris (2002a) has defined as double loop learning or the ability for leaders to take a moment to think about an alternative approach in order to achieve the desired outcome. Leaders trapped in the single loop mindset find this difficult to reconcile, as there is often a response of defensiveness in this type of scenario. It is only the self-reflective leader who can vulnerably recognize a mistake and consider a double loop learning approach (Argyris, 2002a). With a double loop learning approach, leaders should request feedback from employees humbly in order to truly understand the impact of decisions and interactions, potentially building trust between employee and leader (Argyris, 2002a). One of the most impactful ways to build trust is to engage in honest conversations while modeling the ability to accept constructive criticism from members of the team.

Realizing the importance of trust on organizational performance, it is vital that leaders take a proactive approach to establishing this climate of trust. By engaging in meaningful interaction with employees and openly acknowledging strengths and weaknesses, employees begin to build healthy relationships with their leader and hence improve the overall health of the organization. Critical to this process is the need for leaders to model expected behaviors and to engage in self-reflective moments to evaluate the effectiveness of their decisions.

In evaluating the role of leadership in the establishment of trust, Boies, Fiset, and Gill (2015) aimed to identify if two specific components of transformational leadership, which influence trust and productivity. As stated earlier, transformational leadership is a leadership theory that has a natural link with concepts found in the Appreciative Inquiry framework. Transformational leaders, like Appreciative Inquiry, is interested in fostering the intrinsic motivation of employees to engage in productive practices through authentic, open communication, while leaders model expected behavior (Gardiner, 2006; McCaffery, 2010; Lencioni, 2012).

Boies, Fiset and Gill (2015) designed a study that allowed them to measure the effectiveness of transformational leadership traits on the productivity of work teams. In a controlled environment, an actor was hired to lead a team through a building block challenge. The actor was provided a carefully tailored script to use in each of the groups to perform the role of leader in each group (n=47 groups, n=137 participants). There were three sets of groups, with the first two groups exposed to transformational leadership traits, while the third group was considered the control group and was not exposed to any leadership qualities. The first group was exposed to the leader using the transformation leadership trait of inspirational motivation, where the leader was able to express an inspiring vision of the task. The second group was exposed to the leader displaying the transformational leadership trait of intellectual stimulation, where the leader was challenging any preconceived notions of the participants, encouraging them to think creatively. The final group was exposed to a leader who did not display any leadership qualities and remained very monotone and neutral throughout the challenge. Each session began with the leader providing an introduction to the challenge.

After this introduction, each group responded to a survey to assess the participant's perception of the leader. Once the survey was completed, the participants began the building block challenge. Video recordings of each group allowed the researchers to count the number of words spoken during the challenge. These word counts were used to determine the levels of communication that took place during the challenge; the greater the number of words, the higher the communication. After the challenge, the participants were given a survey, which assessed levels of trust with team members during the challenge.

The results showed that when the leader was engaged with the participants using both inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation there were higher levels of communication between the participants and better team performance than with the group that was not exposed to transformational leadership traits. Boies, Fiset and Gill (2015) concluded that the groups who were exposed to the transformational leadership styles had higher levels of trust and outperformed the control group. The researchers also claimed that higher levels of communication were directly related to higher levels of team trust and that it was this trust that resulted in an increase in performance (Boies, Fiset & Gill, 2015). In this study it was determined that transformational leadership traits contribute to the perceptions of trust between individuals who are working on a team, ultimately leading to satisfaction with team performance and the overall productivity of the team. This study supports the need for leaders to consider transformational leadership as a leadership model that can build trust.

While transformational leadership appears to be a key model for leaders to consider when attempting to increase perceptions of trust, Shockley-Zalabak, Morreale, and Hackman (2010) established a model that can be implemented regardless of the theory of leadership embraced by a leader. In fact, they claim that all leaders have the ability to impact levels of trust in an organization. Shockley-Zalabak, Morreale, and Hackman (2010) worked with organizations throughout the world to identify the key dimensions of trust in organizations. Over 4,000 respondents from five countries contributed to the research. As a result of these contributions, the researchers were able to identify five key drivers of organizational trust, including,

competence, openness, and honesty, concern for employees, reliability and identification (Shockley-Zalabak, Morreale & Hackman, 2010). While there is some overlap with the concepts of transformational leadership, these researchers are not interested in promoting a particular leadership style, rather, they are interested in adamantly claiming that trust is the 'main thing' for organizational success. These researchers boldly claim that organizations with high levels of perceived trust have higher levels of organizational productivity and job satisfaction (Shockley-Zalabak, Morreale & Hackman, 2010).

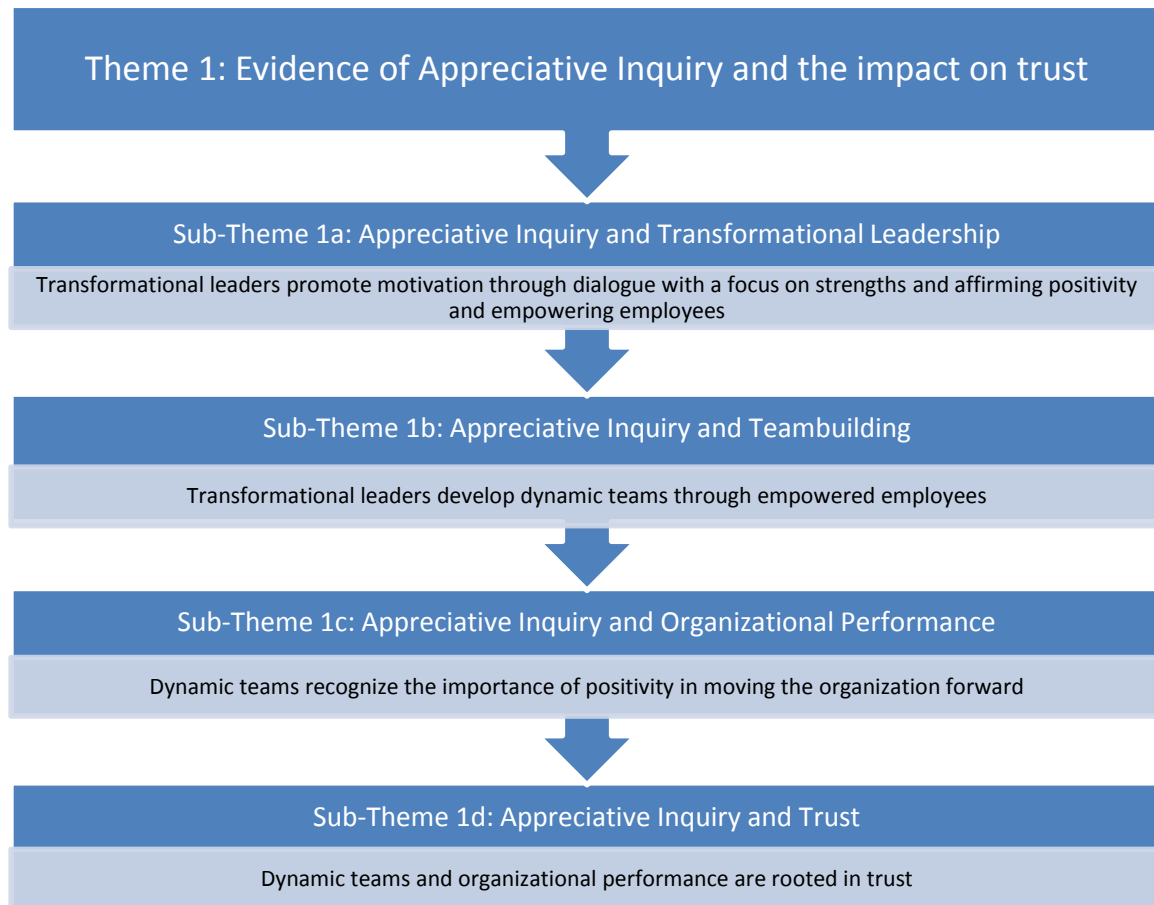
In fact, one of the statements early on in this book that resonated with my research is that distrust breeds a "we versus them behavior" (p.6) and is the reason why organizations struggle to find success. In the introduction of my research, I explained that in my organization there was a current 'we versus them' environment, which was the impetus of my desire to find a tool to build trust. The authors of this book provide concrete methods for each of the five drivers that leaders can embrace in order to become a builder of trust in their organization, emphasizing the vital importance of leaders needing to establish an environment of trust in order for an organization to be effective and employees to be productive.

2.4 Synthesis of the literature review

The aim of this research was to analyze the impact of trust and collaboration between two student support departments within a university setting. Therefore, I sought to investigate whether an improvement in trust would increase cross-departmental collaborations, ultimately leading to a positive impact on productivity and overall enrollment stability. For that reason, this literature review synthesized concepts and theories specific to two key themes essential to this research: (a) Evidence of Appreciative Inquiry and the impact on trust (b) Evidence of the impact of trust on team development and collaboration. The review began with an in-depth synthesis of the Appreciative Inquiry framework, providing a background to the concepts core to this positivity framework, including a review of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop and the 4D cycle of Discovery, Dreaming, Design, and Destiny.

After providing a background to Appreciative Inquiry framework, I then focused on identifying research that linked Appreciative Inquiry and trust. There were four sub-themes of Appreciative Inquiry and trust, each revealing key concepts that are foundational to the Appreciative Inquiry framework (see Table 2.1). In addition, these key concepts circled back to the importance of trust when attempting to develop teams and improve collaboration.

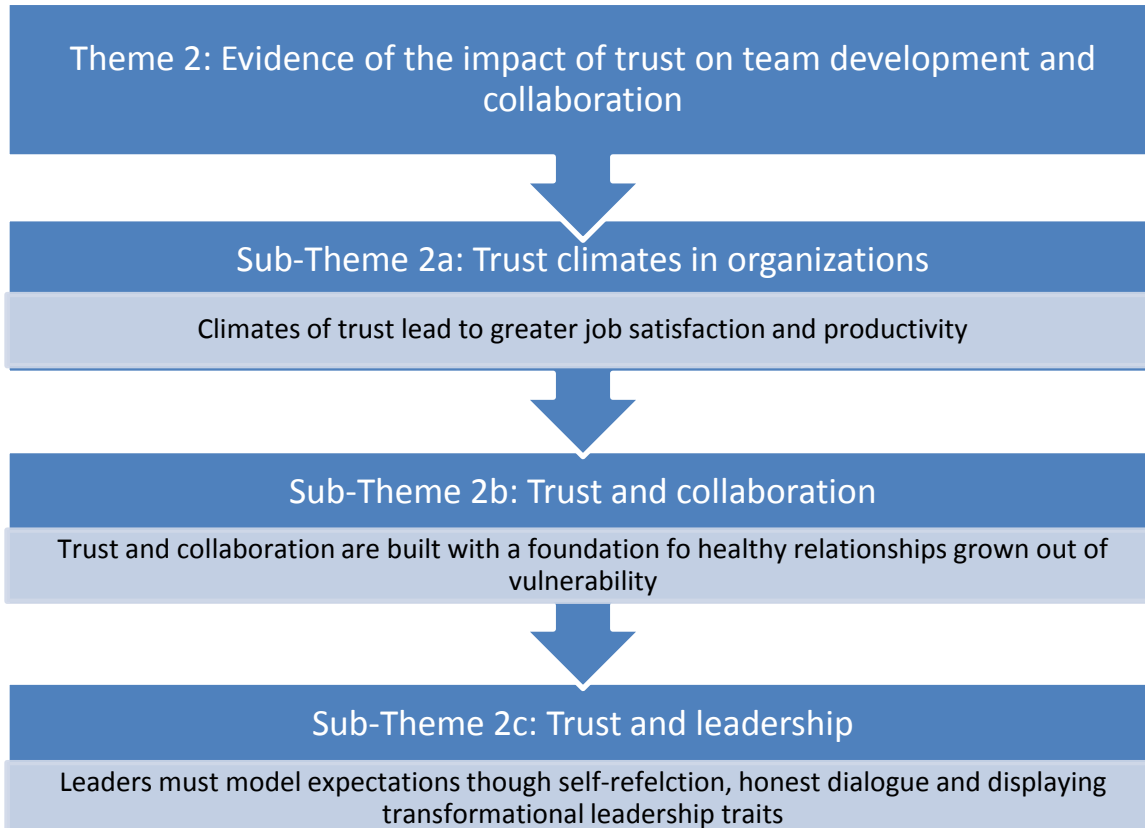
Table 2.1 Theme 1



Through this review, related concepts around leadership, teambuilding, and organizational performance emerged, all with the common thread of trust. Few of the articles reviewed directly analyzed the impact of Appreciative Inquiry on trust; however, concepts of Appreciative Inquiry were found and reviewed. Regardless of the direct intention to research AI as it affects trust, the concepts of positivity, empowerment, and shared governance all emerged as core to effective organizational performance.

In addition to understanding how Appreciative Inquiry is linked to trust, I also reviewed current trends in trust and collaboration from an organizational management perspective (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Theme 2



The literature supported the need for organizations to strengthen trust and collaboration to ensure organizational effectiveness. Through vulnerable dialogue, leaders must proactively seek to establish a culture of trust within both immediate teams and the larger workplace. Vulnerable dialogue leads to healthy relationships centered on empathetic understanding. Essential to this process is the need for leaders to model this expected behavior while also engaging in self-reflection to evaluate the effectiveness of their actions on the development of trust. As a result of this literature review, I determined that all of these key concepts link

closely to the core values of Appreciative Inquiry, indicating this to be an ideal framework to investigate further as a tool to build trust and collaboration between departments.

2.5 Gap in Literature

In the process of reviewing literature, the Appreciate Inquiry framework emerged as an engaging framework that allows for participation from all levels of the organization. As a tool meant to establish the positive core of an organization, it is used to redefine missions and visions of an organization with participation from employees. In fact, research has revealed this tool used extensively as a method to specifically redevelop and reinvigorate nursing programs in many countries (Keefe & Pesut, 2004; Clarke, Werestiuk, Schoffner, Gerard, Swan, Jackson, Steeves & Probizanski, 2012; Harmon, Fontaine, Plews-Ogan, & Williams, 2012). It has also been widely used within non-educational environments as a tool to establish a positive culture within an organization (Miller, Fitzgerald, Preston & Murrell, 2002; Johnson, 2010; Sloth & Hornstrup, 2010; Clarke, Werestiuk, Schoffner, Gerard, Swan, Jackson, Steeves & Probizanski, 2012). This framework has had some use at institutions of higher education; however, it was typically used as a tool to establish a new mission or vision for the future of the institution and not one to improve trust or collaboration between departments (Keefe & Pesut, 2004).

Taking the AI framework and applying it to support interrelated departments within a higher education setting appears to be novel at this stage in my research. This framework has not been widely used as a tool to build trust and collaboration between teams within a university. Nor has it been widely used as a tool to invigorate a bottom-up approach to organically establishing trust between teams. Therefore, I intend to investigate the use of this framework as a tool to improve trust and increase cross-departmental collaborations, ultimately leading to a positive impact on productivity and overall enrollment stability.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of the aim of this research and then extends into my epistemological approach to this study. Based on the literature review, it was determined that the Appreciative Inquiry framework has not been widely used as a method to influence the development of trust in a higher education organization. As a result, there were few examples that I could reference when designing this study; however, it was clear that a social constructivist approach best aligned with the Appreciative Inquiry framework. Therefore, I designed a project that focused on fostering an environment of dialogue and collaboration with the intention of affecting trust between departments at this institution. Taking a sequential exploratory approach, I decided to emphasize qualitative data with quantitative data collected to assist in the interpretation of the qualitative findings in order to address fully each of the research questions (Creswell, 2009).

Following my epistemological approach is a review of the methodology chosen to analyze the data and the design process taken to ensure this mixed methods, sequential exploratory strategy. Embedded in this section is a review of the ethical considerations taken for this project as well as the selection process to ask participants to volunteer their time for this study. Following the design process is a detailed account of the data collection process and the methods chosen for two phases of data collection. Finally, the chapter ends with a review of the importance of reflexivity throughout this research, as well as the strengths and limitations to the methodology.

3.2 Research Aim

The aim of this research was to determine whether the use of the Appreciative Inquiry framework has any effect(s) on the development of trust and collaboration between two student support departments. Therefore, I investigated if an improvement in trust between cross-departmental collaborations, ultimately led to an increase in productivity.

The data collected during this process permitted insight into (a) the connection between the use of Appreciative Inquiry and the development of trust, (b) collaboration between departments using Appreciative Inquiry and (c) perceptions of trust and collaboration and how those perceptions have impacted productivity and a combined ownership for results.

Main Research Question:

- How does using Appreciative Inquiry impact trust and collaboration between two inter-related student support departments within an Art & Design University?

Sub Questions:

- Does using the Appreciative Inquiry framework bridge teams and increase cross-departmental collaboration? If yes, in what way? If no, why not?
- Does the Appreciative Inquiry framework provide individuals with a renewed outlook and positive hope for the future of the organization?
- Does using a positive lens increase levels of trust between individual employees on various teams? If yes, in what way? If no, why not?
- What effect (if any) does increased perceptions of trust increase the positive interactions between team members?
- To what effect (if any) does positive team interaction and celebration impact overall team productivity?

3.3 Epistemological Approach

I decided to take a social constructivist epistemological approach to this study. Social constructivism, while rooted in the work of Vygotsky (1978) is truly an epistemological approach founded in post-modernism ideals. Post-modernism is defined as a way of thought that rejects the notion of objectivity. According to the post-modernist, there is no single truth. The post-modernist does not accept the hierarchical definition of truth and believes knowledge to be ever changing in response to individual needs and the diversity of ideas and thoughts (Merriam, 2009; McCaffery, 2010).

In the world of higher education, the post-modern environment has caused administrators of higher education institutions to reflect on the many assumptions embedded in the idea of owning knowledge. Students in this post-modern environment thrive on choice, change, instability, and ultimately, knowledge at their fingertips (Bloland, 2005). These ideals of the post-modern environment should impact more than just the theoretical, but also the practical. Administrators, staff, and faculty at universities must adjust practice in order to meet the needs of these individuals. In fact, Milliken (2004) claims that post modernism is not only a way of thinking and theorizing, but it is also a way of physically practicing.

It could be argued that this way of practicing should extend beyond the borders of the classroom and into to every department within the university. Just as the student thrives on choice, so does the individual in the workforce. Institutions have numerous employees working within its operational walls, yet the ideas of how knowledge is defined and created often stay between faculty and students. Institutions should recognize the desire for individuals to co-create their environment and provide opportunities for professional development and empowerment of employees in this post-modern world of choice (Milliken, 2004; Bloland, 2005).

The social constructivist view suggests that knowledge is constructed through social interaction about shared concerns (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Through common, shared concerns, individuals collaborate to begin an interactive dialogue articulating a new, alternative point of view. Social constructivism is then rooted in “a common sense understanding and consensual notion as to what constitutes knowledge” (Cork, 2012, p. 39). The social constructivist approach recognizes the way in which knowledge is generated in a collaborative, social setting. As my research aims to uncover ways to build trust between teams it was imperative that the study was designed to ensure interaction and dialogue between participants (see section 3.4.4 for more details). Recognizing the social construction of knowledge in the study design ensured that the research was grounded in the collective response to the practitioner study.

As a leader who has been responsible for a variety of different teams throughout my tenure, I have had many opportunities to witness the ways in which individuals and teams construct reality based on their understanding of circumstances or their interpretation of perspectives. This ability to socially define reality has the potential to either devastate or edify individuals and teams. When devastating, the social construction of what is considered to be valid has been created with limited participation from individuals across functional areas. In these situations, assumptions are made and decisions are upheld without input from relevant participants. When ideas are socially constructed, expectations are created with input from a broader audience, which permits the formation of a collaborative dialogue, resulting in shared ownership for decisions. As social constructionism emphasizes the daily interactions between individuals, it was determined to be the ideal paradigm for this research project (Cork, 2012).

3.4 Methodology

For this project, I chose an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach to analyzing the data (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012) as it aligns with my personal epistemological view that individual perspectives are socially constructed based on experiences. IPA is an approach based on three key areas: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. This theoretical approach is rooted in these multiple theories that, when combined, culminate in a unique framework for analysis. Drawing on the ideals of these three theories, IPA is truly a practical application, which permits the researcher to operationalize each of these theories.

The key concepts taken from the philosophy of phenomenology include contributions made by Husserl (1927), Heidegger (1962/1927), Merleau-Ponty (1962), and Sartre (1956/1943). Each of these philosophers expanded and further developed the theory of studying an individual's experience and perceptions. These philosophers recognized that all individuals are defined by their experiences and how they make sense of those experiences in relationship to the world. The impact of experiences are never isolated to an individual, rather these experiences impact how an individual engages socially with the world around them. As individuals attempt to make

meaning of their experiences, the phenomenological researcher will seek to identify the meaning placed on the experiences (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012).

The key concepts taken from the philosophy of hermeneutics are contributed to the works of Schleiermacher (1998), Heidegger (1962/1927), and Gadamer (1990/1960). As hermeneutics is focused on interpretation, these philosophers were concerned with the actual method of interpretation. Mostly interpreting historical texts, hermeneutics places great care in assuring that context is considered when interpreting. As is evident in the idea of the hermeneutic circle, it is vital to recognize the 'part' in context to the 'whole'. In other words, when interpreting, researchers must examine the experience in light of the external variables that may have affected the experience, or the whole. The hermeneutic circle has received criticism as a method of analysis due to the circularity of the process; however, this process is ideal for a non-linear approach (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012). It allows researchers to move forward and backward through the process and to reconsider an original interpretation after additional information has been reviewed. In addition, hermeneutics is concerned with the researcher being aware of prior knowledge and assumptions when interpreting. As stated by Gadamer (1960 and again in 1990), "The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings" (p. 269, as cited in Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012, p. 26). Further discussion on the concept of bias can be found in the reflexivity section later in this chapter.

The key concepts taken from the philosophy of idiography are not contributions from a few key philosophers; rather, it is a culmination of philosophical thought that is focused on a particular phenomenon (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012). Idiography is concerned with the study of individuals or with the particular (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012). For the IPA researcher, this means that there is one particular experience that is analyzed in detail, which is understood from the perspective of one particular individual and one particular context.

Bringing these three philosophies together to form interpretative phenomenological analysis ensures a holistic approach for studying a singular experience. The IPA researcher will explore an experience through the individual's perspective and the meaning that the individual attached to that experience (phenomenology). The researcher also seeks to interpret the experience and the meaning placed on that experience from both the perspective of the individual as well as the perspective of the researcher, taking both an empathetic and investigative approach (hermeneutics). In addition, the researcher also focuses on one particular experience allowing for a detailed analysis of the study, often searching for similarities or differences between others who have shared the experience (Idiography). Therefore, IPA at its essence is a theoretical approach interested in examining the way in which people make sense of the experiences they encounter throughout life (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012). IPA researchers seek to gather data from a small sample of individuals and hear their perspective about a particular experience. The aim is for the researcher to interpret how an individual interprets one particular experience and identify the impact that experience has had on their lives. Researchers work with participants to engage in self-reflection in order that they may articulate their ideas, thoughts, and feelings around a particular event or experience. IPA researchers may choose to study the similarities and differences between the reflections of each participant.

For this study, an IPA approach was chosen as it aligns well with the aim of the research. As I am seeking to explore the connection (if any) between using Appreciative Inquiry and the development of trust, the individual experience will be the primary source of data. Taking an IPA approach, would assure analysis of each participant's experiences and perceptions on the impact (if any) of Appreciative Inquiry on team development and trust.

In addition, it is important to recognize that the philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry is evolving into its own theoretical perspective and methodology (Calabrese, Cohen, & Miller, 2013). This theoretical perspective is designed to focus on positive successes rather than negative challenges (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider & Godwin, 2010; Center for Appreciative Inquiry, 2011). This Appreciative Inquiry research approach engages groups of individuals to focus on the positive, historical strengths of an organization or department. Due to the history of accusation and negativity between the two teams participating in this study, I decided to use the Appreciative Inquiry framework as a positive platform for collaborative discussion as Appreciative Inquiry is an excellent way to generate energy and the creativity in an organization (Center for Appreciative Inquiry, 2011). In addition, Roberts (2013) found the Appreciative Inquiry model to be a learning framework that takes a holistic approach, which is centered on the positive creativity of each individual.

Also embedded in this research is the use of photo-elicitation in the methodology (Harper, 2002; Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Richard & Lahman, 2015). While this is discussed in more detail in the data collection section, the photo-elicitation and Appreciative Inquiry approaches align with the social constructivist epistemological view and the interpretative phenomenological analysis theoretical view of the study. While photo-elicitation and Appreciative Inquiry approaches are considered theoretical approaches in and of themselves, I have chosen an IPA theoretical approach in tandem with the photo-elicitation and AI approaches as they are complementary and thus further enabled the focus of the study on the individual experience rather than the group or team's experience. By focusing on each individual's particular experience, I attempted to identify common themes between each experience and evaluate if Appreciative Inquiry has made an impact on trust and collaboration between the teams. This is a novel approach to combine these methodologies into a research design using the Appreciative Inquiry framework.

3.5 Design Process

One of the main aims of this research project was to gain insight into the participants' experiences and how those experiences influenced trust between departments, ultimately affecting productivity. This required the study to be designed in a way that encouraged dialogue and collaboration through qualitative data collection methods while also ensuring a quantitative approach was used as support and strengthen the project. Therefore, in order to investigate if the Appreciative Inquiry framework influenced trust and collaboration between departments, I chose to design a mixed method approach through a sequential exploratory strategy.

A mixed methods approach encourages the strengthening and validating of data through both the qualitative and quantitative perspectives; however, the sequential exploratory strategy specifically emphasizes qualitative data as the primary source of data and the quantitative data as the secondary source. As this research is dependent on the participants' perspectives and contributions, a qualitative approach predominated this study, while the quantitative approach provided supporting information. This sequential exploratory strategy is described as a Qualquan strategy placing importance on the qualitative data and using the quantitative data as additional support of the descriptive analysis (Creswell, 2009).

The rationale for this approach was based on the strong desire to generate dialogue between teams through qualitative interaction, while also recognizing that the institution where this study took place relies heavily on quantitative measures to inform decision-making. In order for this research to hold any value to the leadership within the institution, I needed to support the descriptive analysis of the qualitative themes with supporting quantitative data.

Table 3.1 outlines how each research question was addressed through the Qualquan sequential exploratory strategy. A detailed description of each data collection method can be found in section 3.5.4.

Table 3. 1 Methods Outline

Question	Method	Method Type
How does using Appreciative Inquiry impact trust and team development between two inter-related support groups within a four-year Art & Design University?	Appreciative Inquiry Workshop	Qualitative
Does using the Appreciative Inquiry framework bridge teams and increase cross-departmental collaboration? If yes, in what way? If no, why not?	Individual Interviews	Qualitative
Does the Appreciative Inquiry framework provide individuals with a renewed outlook and positive hope for the future of the organization?	Individual Interviews	Qualitative
Does using a positive lens increase levels of trust between individual employees on various teams? If yes, in what way? If no, why not?	Individual Interviews, Reflective Journals	Qualitative
What effect (if any) does increased perceptions of trust increase the positive interactions between team members?	Reflective Journals, Record Sheets	Qualitative and Quantitative
To what effect (if any) does positive team interaction and celebration affect overall team productivity?	Productivity Metrics	Quantitative

3.5.1 Access to Participants

At the time of this study, there were 65 academic faculty and 56 administrative staff employed at the university where the research was conducted. Due to the intimate size of the institution, departments must interact and collaborate effectively in order to achieve the strategic goals and mission of the school. Two important functional areas that are vital to the delivery of the strategic goals are the student life and student operations departments. These two teams are vital to the enrollment of new students and are dependent on one another for success.

The Student Life department team is responsible for extracurricular events, housing, café, student ambassadors, health center, and career services. Each member of this team is responsible for ensuring that the entire student population is aware of these services while also ensuring that the services are meeting the needs of the students. The essence of this department is to meet the experiential needs of the student outside of the classroom.

The Student Operations department is responsible for admissions, registration, study abroad, financial aid, bursar, and academic advising functions. Each member of this team works closely with new students as they move through the enrollment process. Members of this team start the process of building a relationship with students during the enrollment process and then continue to work with these students throughout the student's four years of study at the institution.

Due to the important role of each of the individuals on these teams and the need for consistent team interaction, it is vital that they are able to build relationships with students as well as each other while fostering a nurturing environment of positivity and collaboration. Access to these specific teams permitted an investigation on the influence of the Appreciative Inquiry framework and the impact the framework had on trust and collaboration between these teams.

3.5.2 Ethical Considerations

Written authorization was obtained from the president of the university to engage in a practitioner research project (see Appendix 3.1). This authorization clearly identified this project as a distinct role as researcher, which was not to interfere with my professional role. In addition, permission was requested and received from the president of the university to invite members of the Student Life and Student Operation departments to participate in the research during working hours (see Appendix 3.1). I did not directly approach these individuals, but rather invited these team members to participate via email. The email included the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form, which provided individuals a thorough understanding of the research project and the extent of expectations if they chose to accept the invitation (see Appendix 3.2 & 3.3). Participation was voluntary and did not affect or interfere with tasks required of the employees. All activities required of the participants were completed during a normal workday and did not require the participants to commit additional time to the research. It was expected that the time required of the participants for this research would have little to no adverse effect on the efficiency or productivity of each individual.

I also addressed issues of confidentiality with the participants, ensuring that their contributions will remain anonymous and confidential. In addition, individuals were told that they were free to discontinue their participation at any time during the research without incurring any disadvantage.

Written authorization from the president of the university was also obtained to access historical data reports key to enrollment. The historical data sets provided a baseline measurement of key performance indicators from each department. These performance indicators are general data points that are not directly linked to an individual and thus, ensured anonymity at an individual level.

In addition to the written authorization obtained from the university president, I also went through a rigorous ethical approval process with the University of Liverpool (UoL). UoL requires researchers to submit the Participant Information Sheet, the Participant Consent Form, as well as an Ethics Application Form and an Ethics Response Form. The Ethics Application and Response form are detailed forms that require researchers to address carefully all ethical considerations before conducting the research. I fully satisfied the expectations set by the Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC) at the UoL (see Appendix 3.4).

3.5.3 Selection of the Participants

At the time of the research, the Student Life team was comprised of five individuals and the Student Operations team was comprised of nine individuals. I sought participation from the 14 core members of these teams. Leaders of these teams were not asked to participate due to the time commitment required for the summit. The university did not have the luxury of closing these functional areas for the research; therefore, leaders of each team were asked to keep operations flowing while members of each team were invited to participate in the Appreciative Inquiry workshop. In addition, this research was intended to provide a bottom-up, organic framework for employee engagement. Therefore, leaders were not asked to participate in order to allow for open discussion among employees.

I also did not include the core members of the enrollment team for this project. As the director of the enrollment team, I did not want the enrollment team to feel coerced into participating due to the power relationship between the researcher and the enrollment advisors. While they could have contributed valuable ideas during discussions, it was determined to exclude their participation and rely solely on the participation of the student service departments.

Of the 14 individuals approached to participate in the study, nine individuals agreed to contribute to the research. Unfortunately, four of those nine individuals were unable to participate. One individual was no longer employed by the institution and unavailable to participate, and the remaining three individuals had an unexpected additional workflow, which prohibited them from participating in the Appreciative Inquiry workshop. Since the workshop was truly the launching point for the research, participation in the workshop was crucial in order to engage in any of the follow-up data collection procedures. Final participation in the study included five individuals, three from the Student Life team and two from the Student Operations team.

3.6 Data Collection Process

In light of the sequential exploratory mixed method approach, I chose both the qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the impact of the Appreciative Inquiry framework on the development of trust and collaboration between the Student Life team and the Student Operations team. Starting with the qualitative approaches and ending with the quantitative, all data collection took place between the months of January 2015 through April 2015. Table 3.2 provides a visual representation of the data collection timeline:

Table 3. 2 Data Collection Timeline

January 2015	February 2015	March 2015	April 2015
Appreciative Inquiry Workshop Post-Workshop Evaluation	Individual Interviews Journals		Record Sheets Productivity Metrics

The qualitative approaches took the longest time to collect and took place during a three-month period. The Appreciative Inquiry workshop and the workshop evaluation took place in January of 2015. The workshop was followed by individual interviews, which took place during the month of February 2015 while participants also submitted two reflective journals during the months of February 2015 and March 2015. Data collection ended with obtaining the quantitative data, during the month of April 2015. Details on each data collection approach follow.

3.6.1 Data Collection Methods

Using the sequential exploratory mixed method approach, the data were collected during three separate phases. The first phase included the collection of qualitative and quantitative data during and immediately following the workshop and the second phase included the collection of qualitative data, while the third phase included quantitative data after all qualitative data was collected.

Phase One: Qualitative & Quantitative Collection

Appreciative Inquiry Workshop

Workshop Overview

Volunteer participants were required to attend a one-day collaborative Appreciative Inquiry workshop to discover strengths, dream about the future, design the ideal state, and realize the positive destiny of the teams (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). In alignment with the social constructivist epistemological approach, the workshop was designed to bring all participants together for one day of open dialogue and collaboration. The Appreciative Inquiry workshop provided a platform for individuals to share common concerns and dialogue within a collaborative environment. Ideally, this workshop was to take place at the beginning of the new recruiting cycle in order for the effect of the workshop to infuse a fresh cycle of collaboration between the teams. However, due to the workflow of the participants, the workshop was delayed to mid-cycle. The timing however still provided the team plenty of opportunity to incorporate concepts from the summit prior to the heightened activities that support new student enrollment. The Appreciative Inquiry workshop was presented as a professional development opportunity, with anticipated results that would positively influence the work environment.

Participants were asked to engage collaboratively throughout the day, with four specific exercises to be completed either individually or collectively as a group (see Appendix 3.5 for full power point presentation). The activities provided me with written responses to prompts, each prompt intending to encourage collaborative, positive interaction. Participants were also asked required to contribute to a visual representation of the dialogue with the design of a Positive Core Map. The design of the Positive Core Map was a collaborative process where all individuals contributed to the creation of this one graphic image. This image was then a representation of all the ideas generated throughout the day. The collaborative effort to create this Positive Core Map of concepts from the day solidified the conversations and offered a cohesive illustration with contributions from each participant.

As the workshop took place in a large room with the participants breaking into groups, it proved difficult to record all conversation throughout the day. I made every attempt to record whole group discussion with the individual/small group written exercises taking the place of recorded conversation, when necessary. When a digital recording did not work, I documented the participant's key concepts and ideas on large flip charts at the front of the room for everyone to view. In addition, when the participants worked together I took the time to write field notes to document my immediate impressions of the interactions and noted any specific non-verbal communications that took place.

The one-day workshop was divided into four stages with each stage dedicated to one of the 4-D cycles of the Appreciative Inquiry framework. Each stage was designed to ensure both individual/small group participation, as well as whole group discussion. At the end of the workshop, there was a dedicated time for celebrations with each team member engaged in an individual reflection of the dialogue that took place during the day, with an opportunity to share their overall thoughts with the group. There was also a box of photographs at the celebration stage for the individuals to choose one image that best represented how they were feeling and their thoughts about the summit. This photo-elicitation exercise provided insight into the immediate effect of the summit and the positive or negative impact that occurred. Detailed information about photo-elicitation can be found in the section below titled 'Celebration/Wrap-Up'.

Workshop

The workshop started with the presentation of the overarching concepts of Appreciative Inquiry. The definitions of appreciate and inquiry were discussed in light of this model with emphasis placed on the need for dialogue and inquiry while also ensuring that there was a solid understanding of the 'asset-based' approach versus the 'deficit-based' approach to discussion.

The 4D's of the Appreciative Inquiry model were presented next. Each stage had a specific purpose with detailed instructions to guide the discussion. The Discovery stage was a time for each participant to dig into the professional histories and reveal moments in the past where each individual had a positive and trusting professional moment. The Dream stage was a time for the participants to identify collectively the key elements required for an ideal dream team. The Design stage was a time for individuals to articulate actionable ways that the dream team could truly put into practice the ideals in a professional setting. The Destiny stage was a time for self-reflection to identify how each individual could contribute to this dream team.

At this point in the process, the emphasis was placed on the need to encourage a positive environment for the workshop. Emphasize was given to the importance of perspective, positivity, and listening. All participants were encouraged to respect each individual's contribution and to consider ways in which the ideas could be implemented. In other words, the participants were encouraged consistently to identify ways that the concepts could be put into practice.

Discovery Stage

The discovery stage of Appreciative Inquiry is an opportunity to discover the best of what has been and the best of what is by revealing the root cause of previous success. Appreciative Inquiry interviews are at the core of this framework. The interview allows participants to dig into their past employment history to reveal what gives life to and fuels the desire to do their work. It provides a platform for participants to uncover and share insights to fellow co-workers. Although the Appreciative Inquiry literature titles this activity as an interview, for the purpose of clarity, and to offer a distinction from the interviews conducted between myself and each participant, this activity has been referenced as partner dialogue. For the partner dialogues, participants were asked to collaborate with someone from outside of their immediate department (i.e., a member of the student life department paired up with a member of the student operations department) to enter into this conversation and address specific prompts.

The Appreciative Inquiry literature encourages small, intimate conversations centered on positive questions. Through this focus on the positive, individuals have an opportunity to connect with one another in a new and affirmative way that encourages the building of relationships (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The partner dialogue questions were designed to first identify why each individual joined the current team and to then dig into the past to identify a moment when they were in their ideal work environment. Participants were reminded to listen with a spirit of inquiry and a desire to learn about their teammates, and it was reinforced that this was a safe time to share these stories, emphasizing that the conversations that took place during the workshop were confidential and should not be discussed outside of the room.

The first part of the partner dialogue began with questions related to their current team:

- What were your initial hopes, dreams, and excitements as you first contemplated joining this group?
- Now, describe a peak experience with this team, a time when you felt most alive, most engaged, and proud of yourself, your co-workers and the work you were doing.
- What were all the conditions and circumstances that contributed to that experience?
- How did your best qualities bring out the best in others and how did they inspire you to be the best you could possibly be?
- Reflecting on this peak experience and other experiences of this kind, what do you most value about you and the unique skills, gifts and talents that you bring to this team and the work that you do?
- What do you value most about this team and its larger mission in the organization?

The second part of the partner dialogue focused on previous experiences characterized by an environment of trust:

- How did you know an environment of trust was present?
- How was an environment of trust established?
- What were the benefits of the environment of trust to team members, to the work they were doing and to their organization?
- What can we learn from this team that might help our current team build a stronger environment of trust?

The partner dialogues took place for approximately 45 minutes, although one pair did complete the process more quickly. When all pairs completed the partner dialogues, everyone came back together to share each other's stories. During this time of sharing, the participants identified some common themes that were documented on a flip chart for all to view and reflect upon. At the end of the partner dialogue sharing, I explained the concept of the positive core map (detailed above). Positive core map examples were presented to the group to help visualize the concept and to initiate brainstorming to determine how a visual image could capture the core concepts and key themes that were discussed during the discovery stage (sample provided in Appendix 3.6). I deliberately left the room during this session for approximately 30 minutes to ensure that the participants felt free to discuss and create without oversight.

Dream Stage

The Dream stage asks participants to consider what our world is calling us to be and to create an ideal dream team. Based on the key themes identified during the Discovery stage, the group was asked to reflect on how those positive core ideas could be incorporated into a hypothetical dream team. If presented with an opportunity to design the ideal team, the participants were to identify what this dream team would value, how the dream team would interact, what the dream team would do in practice. The participants were encouraged to expand beyond their immediate circumstances, to think boldly and to imagine creatively.

Individually, participants reflected on the following prompts:

- What are your greatest hopes, dreams, and wishes for the dream team?
- List 10 words that describe your dream team in action

Each participant read through their list and I documented the key themes and concepts that were revealed. The participants then worked to identify a way to depict visually the ideas discussed as a dream team. This visual representation was then added to the group's collective positive core map.

Design Stage

The Design stage required participants to take the dream team one-step further by clearly defining the ideal. This stage of the framework requires individuals to create collectively, a mission that depicts the core values of the dream team. As stated by Whitney, et al. (2004), conscious teams have "principles that foster high performance, collaboration, and trust" (p. 79). Therefore, by identifying common principles that guide actions, the dream team would have a statement to hold each member accountable to their collective core, encouraging collaboration and trust between the teams. Using key concepts from the prior two stages, the team created a mission for both an internal and external audience. Originally, the intention was for the participants to break into smaller groups to initiate discussions, however due to the small size of the participant pool, the group agreed that a collective conversation would best fuel the discussion. The group discussed iterations of a mission statement using key concepts from the prior two stages for approximately 30 minutes. After consensus, the mission statement was added to the group's collective positive core map.

Destiny Stage

The Destiny stage of the workshop required participants to reflect on personal actions and how each member could contribute to the success of the dream team. The team discussed what actions define the future of the dream team and also identified actionable ways that each participant could empower each other while learning from each other in light of the collective mission. Individually, participants reflected on the following prompts:

Individual Reflection:

- What will I do more of?
- What will I do less of?
- What will I continue to do?

Team Reflection:

- What should the team do more of?
- What should the team do less of?
- What should the team continue to do?

I informally asked each participant if they were comfortable sharing their reflection points. Recognizing the potential vulnerability of this process and to avoid group pressure, I privately asked each participant if they were comfortable sharing their reflection points with the group. Each participant was eager to share verbally their ideas with the group. Key concepts were identified and I indicated that a master list would be sent to everyone later for their verification. This list was also provided so that the participants could reflect upon these concepts and reflect on how they could implement these ideas.

Celebration/Wrap Up

While the celebration stage is not technically part of the 4D Appreciative Inquiry cycle, I felt strongly that the teams needed to be able to reflect on the work accomplished during the workshop. A set of 22 decontextualized images were passed amongst the group and each individual chose one to three images that best described their current thoughts and feelings about the workshop. Some of the participants shared images that depicted how they felt when they first started the workshop and then chose a second image depicting how they felt at the end of the workshop. Each participant explained why they chose the image and how it best illustrated their thoughts.

The essence of this methodological approach is to use photographs as a tool to initiate dialogue. It is most common to have the participants actually take photographs to present to the interviewer during an interview, although decontextualized images chosen by the researcher can also be used as a metaphorical image that can be interpreted by the interviewee (Richard & Lahman, 2015). Those photographs that are chosen by the participant are commonly used to discuss topics such as identity, family, community, and cultural awareness (Harper 2002). In addition, Clark-Ibanez (2004) suggests that individuals use photographs as a way to communicate the intimate details of their lives. Using a photo as a trigger for conversation during a discussion provides a great tool for interviewees to share their thoughts and feelings in a more comfortable setting and the less awkward environment.

The benefits of photo-elicitation as described by Harper (1994) and Collier (1995) are most aligned with this project as they both identify photo elicitation as a process that provides a platform for collaboration between the participant and the researcher, as well as in focus groups of individuals (as cited in Richard & Lahman, 2015). Specifically, the link between images and dialogue aligns with the overall theory of Appreciative Inquiry and the design of the workshop as the photographs provided an impetus for collaboration and dialogue between myself and the participants.

Providing images for the participants to choose from empowered the participants to make a choice and then to explain their thoughts or feelings leading to that choice (Richard & Lahman, 2015). In all cases, it resulted in the participants articulating their thoughts about Appreciative Inquiry and encouraged the participants to reflect on ways in which they could take these concepts into their daily interactions between teams.

Post-Workshop Evaluation

The summit wrapped up with an anonymous evaluation that was administered one week after the workshop. The evaluation was designed to capture individual thoughts about the workshop, gauge levels of trust and determine how Appreciative Inquiry could make a positive impact on team interactions. Prior to administering the evaluation, three 'critical friends' who did not participate in the research project, reviewed the statements to check for clarity of purpose (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005). These 'critical friends' allowed me to pilot the evaluation instrument so that the essence of the questions aligned with the research question being asked. Based on the feedback from the 'critical friends', no changes or amendments were required. The evaluation was designed with a Likert scale for responses indicating agreement or disagreement with the statement.

Phase Two: Qualitative Collection

Individual Interviews

Interviews offer a unique way to explore further the thoughts and feelings of the interviewee (Bell, 2010). As this research examined the relationship between departments and the perceived levels of trust, interviews were the ideal method of revealing these underlying thoughts and feelings that were not revealed during the workshop.

Individual interviews were conducted with all participants as a follow-up to the workshop. Because the participants are part of two overarching main departments, I debated whether to conduct team/department interviews or individual interviews due to the nature of the work at the school.

Each team within the Student Operations and Student Life departments require seamless interaction with one another to ensure that student needs have been met. I expected some issues of trust due to the everyday interactions between these departments; therefore, I initially anticipated that a team interview would allow an opportunity to deepen discussions about trust and collaboration in light of department collaboration. I expected that conducting department interviews would reveal common ideologies embraced by the full department, ideologies that may not be revealed through the workshop. However, due to the limited number of participants, I decided that semi-structured individual interviews would provide a better environment for a conversation about trust between individuals and teams.

The interview questions were designed to further probe into the culture of trust and collaboration and the impact Appreciative Inquiry has had on interactions between teams. Concepts were used from the *Appreciative Team Building* textbook to guide the development of the interview questions (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, Cherney & Fry, 2004). Whitney et al. (2004) provide topic-based questions designed to encourage high performing teams with a dedicated section in the book titled “Fostering Supportive and Empowering Relationships” (p. 28). This section focuses on trust and collaboration with questions to guide this type of improvement. Examples of the types of questions asked included:

- What elements of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop resonated with you most and why?
- Have you incorporated any of these elements in your interactions with a member of your immediate team? If yes, please give an example. Have you incorporated any of these elements in your interactions with members outside of your immediate team? If yes, please provide an example.
- Have you noticed any change in the way in which you approach a new project or task? Please provide an example.
- Have you noticed any change in trust with members of your immediate team? Please provide an example.

All interviews were digitally recorded with the participant's permission. Each participant was asked the same questions with total interview times varying in length from 10 to 45 minutes. For the full interview guide, please see the Appendix 3.7. The interviews were conducted in a private room where there was no opportunity to be overlooked or overheard.

Reflective Journals

Participants were asked to contribute to the research through a reflective journal for two months after the workshop, which focused on team collaboration. A journal guide with specific prompts to direct their reflective focus was provided. The guide asked participants to reflect on their personal interactions between team members within and outside of their immediate team. Individuals were asked to document their use of a positive lens when dealing with a concern as well as document their contribution to building trust between teams (see glossary for additional information on a positive lens). Examples of the types of prompts provided include:

- Describe a moment from this past week when you chose to engage with a team member through a positive lens. How did the team member respond? How did you feel about this interaction?
- In light of the Appreciative Inquiry framework, describe two moments of collaboration with fellow teammates from this past week. Was the interaction positive or negative? In what way?
- Reflect on the Dream Team's mission: "insert mission here". How did your interactions with students and team members reflect this mission?

Phase Three: Quantitative Collection

Record Sheets

Record sheets were used to document a quantitative view of the interaction between teams after the qualitative data collection had been completed through the Appreciative Inquiry workshop, individual interviews and the journals (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005). This quantitative approach documented the number of positive versus negative interactions of the participants. The participants in this research were routinely asked to join meetings by their managers in order to conduct the tasks and responsibilities of their position. With the participant's permission, I attended these meetings as a silent observer to keep track of positive contributions to the dialogue. In accordance with ethical considerations, I only logged contributions made by research participants, even though non-workshop participants were in attendance at these work-related meetings. The recording sheet was designed to provide me with a quick and easy format to track when individuals are contributing to positive or negative team interactions. The sample record sheet template is presented below:

Table 3. 3 Sample Record Sheet Template

Retention Meeting 04/15/2015		
Participants	# of Positive Contributions	# of Negative Contributions
Participant 1		
Participant 2		
Participant 3		
Participant 4		

As identifying what constitutes a positive versus a negative contribution is a subjective endeavor, I chose to refer to definitions as defined by the Merriam-Webster (January 11, 2015) dictionary to assist in the determination of what should be identified as positive versus negative:

Positive:

- Good or useful
- Thinking about the good qualities of someone or something
- Thinking that a good result will happen
- Hopeful or optimistic

Negative:

- Harmful or bad
- Not wanted
- Thinking about the bad qualities of someone or something
- Thinking that a bad result will happen
- Not hopeful or optimistic

Productivity Metrics

Finally, improvements in productivity were captured through data presented via Institutional Performance Metrics. These data were collected from both the 2014 and 2015 enrollment cycles to determine if there was a change in productivity at each of the enrollment conversion stages. These enrollment stages include applications submitted, admission into the university, financial aid packaging, deposits paid, all leading to enrollment. During prior enrollment cycles, it was common to have issues arise at various points that prevented a student from moving through the necessary enrollment stages. I captured these issues and trends on the productivity metrics as a method to identify if there were any improvements in completion and movement through each stage. These data were captured at the end of the data collection period during the month of April 2015. While the data were collected as a snapshot of activity in April, the data actually offered a view of the productivity that took place during the months of February through April for both the 2014 and the 2015 recruitment cycles. This provided a year over year comparison for nine weeks of data from this collection period.

Summary of Data Collection Methods

In summary, the data collection was completed through a sequential exploratory method with three phases beginning with both qualitative and quantitative collection; phase two of strictly qualitative collection, supported by quantitative collection taking place during the third phase. Qualitative and quantitative data were generated during the month of January through the Appreciative Inquiry workshop, photo elicitation exercise and post workshop evaluation. Qualitative data were generated through individual semi-structured interviews, and reflective journals during the months of February and March. Quantitative data were generated during the month of April with record sheets and productivity metrics. Ultimately, each data collection method was used to obtain a qualitative view of each participant's experience with the Appreciative Inquiry framework and if that framework impacted trust while also collecting the quantitative data for a numerical representation of this impact. All data collection occurred during the months of January through April 2015.

3.6.2 Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed to determine (a) if there was a connection between the use of Appreciative Inquiry and the development of trust, (b) if Appreciative Inquiry has contributed to a stronger sense of collaboration between these two departments, (c) if improvements in trust and collaboration are identified, have those improvements impacted productivity and a combined ownership for results. The analysis was completed using a mixed method sequential Qualquan approach, exploring emergent themes revealed in the qualitative data and then embedding the quantitative data into the analysis.

Qualitative

As this research intended to investigate the impact of trust, there was a subjective element to the data. It required interpretation of the data in order to determine patterns and improvements to perceived levels of trust. By primarily using a qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis, I sought to uncover the subjective meaning that the participants have placed on their experiences as these experiences have been socially defined (Merriam, 2009). Approaching the analysis in this way aligns with my epistemological perspective as this qualitative approach recognizes the social construction of an individual's reality (Merriam, 2009).

The Appreciative Inquiry workshop, individual interviews, and the journals were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify emerging themes. Recorded portions of the collected data (individual interviews) were transcribed verbatim. The analysis was then done with each individual's contributions through careful reading of the transcript to identify emerging themes. The first phase of the review was done through a descriptive exploratory read of the transcript (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Initial observations were documented in the margins of the transcript of each participant's contribution during the first read. Next, a second deeper read into the transcript sought to identify the linguistic characteristics of the language used, seeking to interpret the way content and meaning were articulated by each participant (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). During a third read of the transcripts, I was seeking to interpret the meaning of the individual's experiences and label these meanings or concepts into themes. Each of these three reviews was done at the individual level for each participant. After all participant contributions were analyzed in this individualized manner, the emerging themes of each participant were mapped between participants to identify similar patterns of thought. Through this cross evaluation, I was able to isolate common patterns as they emerged from the particular contribution of one participant to shared similarities across all participants.

Quantitative

To further support the qualitative analysis, quantitative data were collected. This approach was chosen due to the data-driven environment of the institution. Decisions at this institution are primarily driven by quantitative data that is reviewed and analyzed on a weekly and yearly basis. In order to ensure that this study meets the data expectations of administrators at this institution, the quantitative data points were reviewed in order to build on the results of the qualitative analysis. In addition, the sequential exploratory approach uses the quantitative data as additional support for the descriptive analysis. By using this Qualquan approach, the quantitative data were used to assist in the interpretation of the qualitative data (Creswell, 2009).

The post workshop evaluation, record sheets and institutional metrics were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify the frequency of the behavior. The record sheets were analyzed to determine the frequency of both positive and negative interactions between individuals during collaborative meetings, identifying trends in the interaction between participants in the study. The institutional metrics data offered insight into the number of students who had successfully moved through the enrollment cycle, including completion of deposits paid, and registration for classes. These data were used to describe the trends in comparison with the prior year's activity. Students cannot move through this cycle without the assistance of individuals on both the Student Life and Student Operations teams. Therefore, by identifying trends in the number of students who successfully maneuver through the enrollment process in comparison to the prior year, I was able to describe levels of productivity for each of these important steps. The institutional metrics data points are holistic metrics that reflect the activities of the entire Student Operations and Student Life teams and is not reflective of just the research participants.

By embedding the quantitative data into the qualitative, I used the secondary data collected to build further on the results of the qualitative and to offer additional description to the trends identified.

This mixed method approach was used to validate the frequency of emergent themes identified in the qualitative phase with the frequency of activity identified in the quantitative phase.

3.6.3 Reflexivity

Research within the researcher's own professional environment can be a delicate proposition. The researcher must constantly be cognizant of his or her prior knowledge about the research topic and the organization. Researchers must consider the fine line of confidentiality in their dual role of insider researcher and employee while respecting access to information that may or may not be part of the research endeavor (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). Recognizing the delicate nature of an insider research project was the first step in ensuring ethical considerations were respected for the participants.

As an acting participant in this practitioner research project, I engaged in thoughtful and consistent periods of self-reflection and reflexivity to refocus and ensure alignment with the purpose of the research. This was done through weekly self-reflective journals and bi-monthly discussions with my thesis supervisor. This process allowed me to reflect on the data that were being collected in the moment, as well as ensuring that I was taking the necessary steps to distance my professional self from the research. As an insider researcher, there needs to be a concentrated effort to detach from the personal impact of the research and make an effort consciously to focus on the role of researcher and the inquiry process (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). This was especially important during the individual interview process. During these interviews, I avoided making a personal connection with the stories shared during the interview and worked diligently to avoid leading the conversation based on prior knowledge of situations. As this is a small institution, I was constantly interacting with the participants on a daily basis to conduct normal work requirements and unable to completely disconnect myself from the participants. Through self-reflection and self-awareness, I deliberately sought to separate my role as a researcher from my role as employee during these interactions. It was only during interactions specific to the research project that I engaged with the team as the researcher and monitored interaction and behaviors in light of the project.

3.7 Summary of Methodology Chapter

As the aim of this research was to determine whether the use of the Appreciative Inquiry framework had any effect(s) on the development of trust and collaboration between two student support departments, it was imperative to approach the design of the study from a collaborative perspective. Therefore, a social constructivist approach was taken to designing the methodology for this research. Using the complementary theoretical perspectives of interpretative phenomenological analysis, Appreciative Inquiry theory, and photo-elicitation theory, there was a focus on the analysis of individual experiences. These theories resulted in both qualitative and quantitative data collection through a sequential exploratory mixed method approach. A summary of the data collected and the method utilized are found in Table 3.4.

Table 3. 4 Data Collection and Method Utilized

Data Collection	Method
Appreciative Inquiry Workshop	Qualitative
Photo-Elicitation	Qualitative
Post-workshop evaluation	Quantitative
Individual Interviews	Qualitative
Reflective Journals	Qualitative
Record Logs	Quantitative
Institutional Metrics	Quantitative

Care was taken to ensure that the data collection methods provided a platform for collaborative dialogue between participants while also ensuring opportunity for the participants to reflect on their individual experience with the Appreciative Inquiry framework through individual interviews and reflective journals. By focusing on each individual’s particular experience, there was an emphasis on the identification of common themes between each experience, which resulted in a determination of the impact Appreciative Inquiry made on trust and collaboration between the teams.

Chapter Four: Findings, Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction and Overview

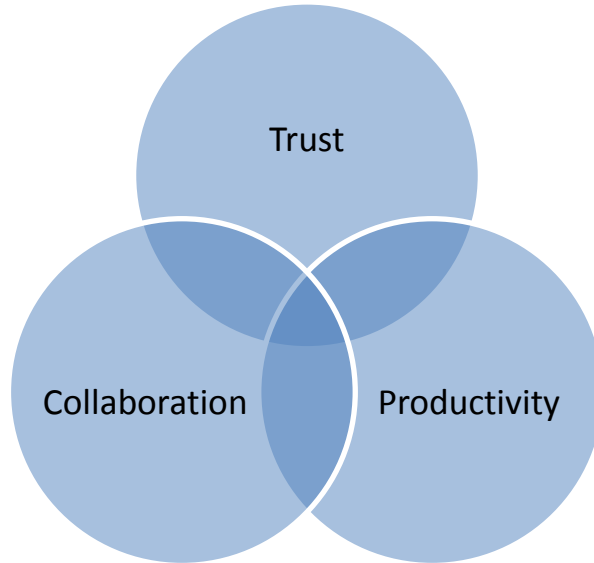
This chapter will focus on the qualitative and quantitative data collected from the participants during this research. The aim of my research was to determine if the Appreciative Inquiry framework could be used as a tool to build trust and thus promote collaboration between two student support departments. Using a mixed methods process through a sequential exploratory strategy, the research was conducted in two phases. Woven into this chapter is an analysis and discussion of findings from each piece of data during the two phases of data collection. The first phase focused on qualitative methods, including the Appreciative Inquiry workshop, photo elicitation exercise, post-workshop evaluation, individual interviews and participant journals. These qualitative data were analyzed by focusing on each individual's particular contribution and seeking evidence of common themes found throughout. The second portion of this chapter addresses the second phase of the data collected, which focused on quantitative methods, including record sheets of positive contributions and productivity metrics. These quantitative methods were analyzed to determine if the metrics supported the qualitative analysis. This Qualquan approach emphasizes the qualitative data with the quantitative data used to support the qualitative findings (Creswell, 2009). Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the emergent themes that were identified in the data collected through both phases of the process.

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach was taken with every data element described in the findings. At its core, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis seeks to uncover how individuals make sense of their experiences. In particular, the emphasis is placed on how these experiences are significant for individuals (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012). All people respond to experiences, and the IPA researcher is interested in uncovering the importance of a particular response from an individual and why that response was chosen. For this research, I chose the IPA framework due to the small sample size.

IPA is ideal for a small number of participants, as it requires a close examination of experiences to take place, seeking to uncover similarities and differences within the same experience (Smith, Flowers & Larking, 2012). All of the participants for this research engaged in the same experiences during the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) workshop with additional data collection taking place after the workshop to determine the effectiveness of the concepts that were learned during the workshop and the corresponding experiences that occurred as a result. Ultimately, the goal was to determine if the concepts acquired during the workshop made an impact on trust and collaboration between the participants from two student support departments.

During this study, eight different qualitative data points and two types of quantitative data points were collected (see table 3.4). All qualitative data was carefully reviewed on a case-by-case basis, with the same type and level of scrutiny applied to all contributions. The first step taken was to document each data element in a consistent manner. This required organizing the documentation collected during the Appreciative Inquiry workshop, consolidating the post-workshop evaluation results, transcribing the individual interviews, and logging journal entries. Once all data elements were carefully organized and logged, I then read and re-read each submission, documenting 'exploratory comments' as I sought to describe ideas that appeared to have significance to each participant. After identifying ideas that appeared to have significance, I then grouped ideas into common, emergent categories (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012). After this process was completed for a particular data element, I color coded submissions to highlight the similarities between experiences. Once similarities were identified, I was able to recognize three important themes that were running consistently between the contributions made by the participants. The three emergent themes identified in the findings include trust, collaboration, which then led to productivity (see diagram 4.1).

Diagram 4. 1 Emergent Themes



The image above was chosen to illustrate the emergent themes due to the unique way in which each theme is integrated and overlaps with one another. While concepts of trust did emerge most often in the data, trust was very closely linked to how individuals chose to collaborate and ultimately affected how individuals measure job satisfaction implying an impact to productivity.

4.2 Phase 1: Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

Data collection began with the qualitative elements collected through workshop activities, individual interviews, and journal submissions over a three-month period during the middle of a recruitment cycle. Based on the timing of the data collected, the engagement between the two student support departments was at its peak of activity and the participants were interacting with one another on a daily basis.

4.2.1 Findings from Appreciative Inquiry workshop

The research began with a one-day Appreciative Inquiry workshop with all five participants. The workshop consisted of four stages: discover, dream, design, destiny. During each of the four stages of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop, participants were asked to complete an activity. Each activity was designed to encourage dialogue and collaboration between the participants.

Discovery Stage

The discovery stage is intended to reveal previous successes among the participants. With a dialogue guide, participants paired with someone from outside of their immediate department to ask one another questions about their prior professional experience (see Appendix 4.1 for full partner dialogue guide). After all partner dialogues were complete, the group came back together to share what they had learned about one another. As they were speaking and highlighting important aspects from the conversation, they were asked to identify key themes. I recorded all key themes as they were discovered during the conversations. After all, participants shared their thoughts, we collectively looked at the items that were written down on a flip chart and discussed the areas of commonality between everyone's previous successes. After analyzing all comments for commonalities, four types of comments were identified as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4. 1 Discovery Stage Types

Common Type	Description
Team Dynamics/Collaboration	Comments made regarding team dynamics and a sense of collaboration as being important factors that are reflective of positive experiences. Team dynamics includes concepts such as honesty, trust, respect, communication, transparency, rapport, and productivity.
Student Focus	Comments made regarding the student experience as an important factor reflective of a positive employment experience. All comments regarding the student experience highlighted the student as the center and purpose for employee actions.
Sense of Purpose	Comments made regarding the importance of purpose as a key factor reflective of a positive employment experience. These comments included ideas such as clear priorities, mission-driven, focus on goals, vision.
Personal	Comments made regarding the importance of professional development and personal opportunity as an important factor reflective of a positive work experience.

Team dynamics and collaboration far exceeded all other types of comments made by the participants. During the discussion, the participants recognized a large number of comments made about the importance of the team cohesion and collaboration between departments. Table 4.2 shows the results of the frequency of comments by category.

Table 4. 2 Discovery Stage Type Frequency

Common Type	N=89	% of Total
Team		
Dynamics/Collaboration	51	57%
Student Focus	18	20%
Sense of Purpose	13	15%
Personal	7	8%

It is interesting to note that Appreciative Inquiry has been used as a tool to improve team dynamics (Johnson, 2010; Sloth & Hornstrup, 2010; Calabrese, Cohen & Miller, 2013). In fact, Calabrese, Cohen and Miller (2013) identified the positive effects from using the Appreciative Inquiry framework with a dysfunctional team to truly transform and build the team into a cohesive unit. I was struck by how quickly this concept emerged early in the workshop, signifying not only importance for the participants but also perhaps reflective of the dissatisfaction with the current team dynamics. Some the direct comments that reflect prior satisfaction with team dynamics that may not be reflective of their current environment are below.

“There was no unnecessary tensions between employees.” Jordan

“We had trust in the work of teammates.” Harper

“There was increased job satisfaction which improved employee retention.” Riley

“There was less stress when others were reliable and work got done.” Dakota

“There was team comradery and we could trust in the work of teammates.” Bailey

Since this exercise was intended to look to previous successes with prior employment, the participants did not speak directly about their current work environment. However, as an insider practitioner aware of the current team dynamics at this institution, it caused me to reflect on how these comments may have been highlighted due to an absence of such experiences in their current positions.

Student focus was the second most common type of comment made by the participants. As the team shared their experiences from the partner dialogues they were revealing moments in their past that were descriptive of a positive work environment. In each of those cases, the participants recognized that it is the student who gave their work purpose. Examples of the types of comments made during the partner dialogues are below and reflect the student at the center of their work.

“Chance to make a difference in student’s academic careers.” Jordan

“Be a part of student learning and development.” Riley

“Empower students to own their degree and future.” Harper

“Watching students grow and develop. Student enthusiasm!” Dakota

“Willing to do anything to provide the best student experience.” Bailey

After identifying the important aspect of experiences that have been positive, the participants were then tasked with creating a graphical image to represent these ideas. Collectively, participants agreed that at the core of their desire to collaborate is the student. Each of these participants wholeheartedly confirmed that creating a positive student experience and helping students develop as individuals was the driving force behind each of the ideas presented as the core of their positive work. This core of positive work; the student experience, was then illustrated by the participants. The illustration created (Illustration 4.1) represents members of various teams linked together with a common chain.

All members are connected to a pillar that is being held up by one of the leaders at the institution. On top of the pillar is an image of a student in their cap and gown, having successfully completed their degree at the university.

Illustration 4.1 Discovery Phase Illustration



Dream Stage

The next phase of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop took participants into a dreaming stage. The dream stage requires participants to idealize, or dream about, the perfect team based on the important concepts that were identified during the discovery stage. This is a key tenet of the Appreciative Inquiry framework as it places ownership into the hands of the participants, seeking to uncover an organic bottom-up approach to exploring the future (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). In order to explore these ideas, the participants were provided with a worksheet that required them to self-reflect about their ideal team with two prompts.

Prompt 1: What are your greatest hopes, dreams, and wishes for the dream team?

The first prompt was designed to elicit freethinking regarding an ideal team. Each participant took fifteen minutes to individually reflect on the important aspects of the team that would drive the student success. Two of the five participants explicitly addressed the student, with three participants highlighting team dynamics. Table 4.3 provides direct quotes from the participants.

Table 4. 3 Dream Stage Quotes

Focus	Direct Quotes
Student Focus	<i>"Working collaboratively toward the student's best interest" Dakota</i>
	<i>"Purely student focused; student development centered with developmental programming" Bailey</i>
Team Focus	<i>"Collegial ease" Jordan</i>
	<i>"Common goals toward a greater good/purpose" Riley</i>
	<i>"Timely, committed, open-minded, flexible, evolving, shared goals, adapting, realistic expectations of self and others, consider the welfare of all, hold each other accountable, open environment to try new ideas and communication" Harper</i>

Recognition of the student and team focus was found throughout the workshop as the team continued to highlight the importance of both the team and the student as the center of their activity. Collaborating on behalf of the student emerged as an important description of an ideal team.

Prompt 2: List 10 action verbs that describe your dream team.

When asked to list action verbs that describe the dream team the participants hesitated. It was explained to them that what I was looking for were concrete ways that the ideal team could be put into practice. After further discussion, results revealed two types of actions, attitudinal and operational actions. Attitudinal actions were comments listed that regarded the attitude of the employee whereas operational actions were comments regarding operational efficiencies between teams. For example, Riley identified the following attitudinal actions that were important to the dream team:

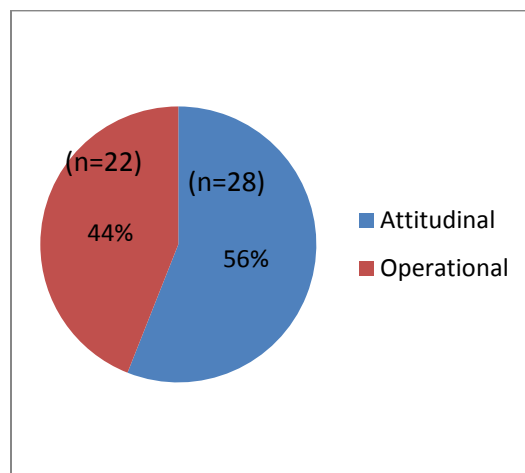
“Enthusiastic, intentional, thoughtful, gracious, humble, confident, encouraging” Riley

Whereas, Jordan emphasized operational actions:

“Collaborative, communicative, efficient, effective, opposite of siloed” Jordan

Table 4.4 shows the percentage of comments made for both attitudinal and operational comments.

Table 4. 4 Dream Stage Actions



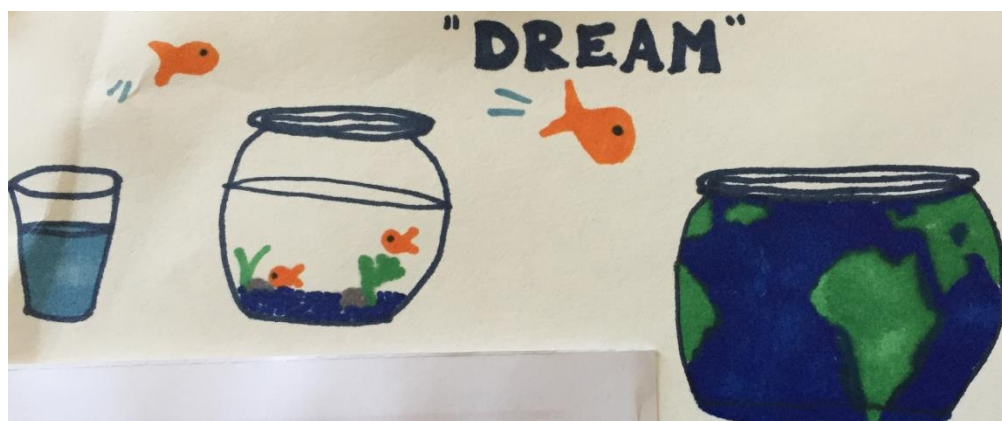
While the two types of actions were very close in the number of comments made under each heading, the attitudinal actions were higher in number (n=28) than those operational comments (n=22). When the participants discussed this in detail together they recognized that the attitudes and the perspectives that individuals bring into the workplace sets the tone for the environment and can either make or break the momentum. The attitudinal concepts included words such as ‘encouraging, motivating, empathizing, respectful and trustful’, all descriptive of the attitudes or perspectives that employees should embrace in order to be effective, as well as indicators of job satisfaction. It is with these positive perspectives that the team is able to collaborate on operational efficiencies, which ultimately leads to productivity. Operationally, there was recognition that the team should engage in behaviors such as ‘communicating, collaborating, being efficient and organized, and solution oriented’. These types of behaviors are reflective of teams that work together for the good of the organization.

I was struck by the large number of attitudinal concepts chosen to describe a dream team and how the concepts discussed during this portion of the workshop were so closely linked to the research conducted by Cameron, Mora, Leutscher and Calarco (2011). Cameron et al. (2011) researched the effectiveness of positivity on organizational effectiveness. They found that positivity is developed as a result of meaningful relationships. With meaningful relationships comes a positive organizational climate and it is when the climate of an organization is positive that there is then a positive impact on the organization’s effectiveness (Cameron et al. 2011). The participants’ responses in my own research support the idea that positivity and attitudes in the workplace are important to employees and should be nurtured to ensure an organization is functioning at an optimal level.

After the participants discussed the ideal components of a dream team, they were then asked to depict their thoughts through an image to add to their prior illustration of the student at the core and center of their work’s purpose (see Illustration 4.1 above). After much discussion, they agreed that they wanted a team with vision and the vision required both the right attitude and the required operational efficiencies to achieve the vision.

The team drew an image of a goldfish jumping out of a small cup into a fish bowl and then that fish jumping out of the fish bowl into a fish bowl representative of the world. With operational efficiencies, the team agreed that they could easily conquer the initial jump from a cup into a fish bowl, indicating a shift from individual efforts to collaborative efforts within a department or team. However, the team recognized that it is only with a positive attitude and conquering spirit that the team can jump from the smaller fish bowl into the larger fish bowl of the 'world', symbolizing collaboration beyond just their immediate team to collaboration with the larger institutional community.

Illustration 4. 2 Dream Stage Illustration



Design Stage

The next stage of the workshop is the design stage, which requires participants to expand on the discovery and dream stages to design a realistic path toward the ideal team. Participants needed to think of ways that the ideal team could actually be put into practice. In an attempt to link all prior ideas from the previous two stages, the activity identified for this stage required the participants to create a purpose statement. This purpose statement needed to be reflective of the positive successes from the past (identified during the discovery stage) and the important themes recognized as ideal (identified during the dream stage).

The planned intention was to provide each participant with a worksheet, and then ask everyone to work in small groups to initiate discussion around a purpose statement. However, the participants chose to work together as one group on this exercise. They openly discussed ideas by reviewing the key concepts identified during the dream stage. The group was determined to include both the attitudinal expectations as well as the operational efficiencies required to ensure cohesion, with the student experience driving each of these expectations. After almost 30 minutes of debate and discussion, the participants collectively constructed the following purpose statement:

“With dynamic collaboration, honesty, and transparency the [...] student services departments thoughtfully seek to enhance the student experience and engage our learners. We encourage open dialogue, new perspectives, and personal accountability. Cohesion, broad experiences, cooperation, and humility together inspire an intentional community committed to the growth and development of our students, by embracing the inherent value of every individual; we shape the future of a contributing citizenry.”

In the very first sentence of the purpose statement, the participants chose to specify the way in which members of the student services departments should engage with one another, with honesty and transparency, similar to the attitudinal actions detailed during the dream stage.

This was the first mention of the words honesty and transparency during the workshop, yet the participants placed significant emphasis on these concepts during their discussions around the purpose statement and insisted that these words be used to describe the way in which to interact. This caused me to consider the role of honest and transparent communication between employees. I was able to uncover that many researchers (Lencioni, 2012; Miller, Fitzgerald, Preston & Murrell, 2002) claim these concepts of honesty and transparency are key variables to establishing an environment of trust. Taylor (2007) took that one-step further by recognizing that trust ultimately leads to collaboration.

The underlying importance of honest and transparent communication was also reflective in the research conducted by Clarke, Werestiuk, Schoffner, Gerard, Swan, Jackson, Steeves and Probizanski (2012) where the emergence of transparent communication as an essential factor for collaboration was revealed during participant discussions. Clarke et al. (2012) intended to use the Appreciative Inquiry framework to reveal what was causing a negative patient/nurse handoff in a busy hospital environment. During the discussion by the participants, it became clear that a lack of transparent communication on the patient's records was causing a lack of trust between the nurses. This underlying issue of a lack of transparent communication was prohibiting collaboration vital to their success and breeding mistrust between the participants in this study. Concepts of honesty and transparency were also reflective of the research conducted by Miller et al. (2002) as they used the Appreciative Inquiry framework specifically as a tool seeking to develop trust between two recently merged organizations. In fact, this is the only research that I was able to find that attempted to use the Appreciative inquiry framework for developing trust. Miller et al.'s research revealed that transparent and honest communication were the missing element for these organizations and with improvements to communication there was an impact on the development of trust. In addition, the research conducted by Boies, Fiset, and Gill (2015) found that higher levels of communication were directly related to higher levels of team trust and that it was this trust that resulted in an increase in performance. While Boies, Fiset and Gill (2015) did not use the Appreciative Inquiry framework, their research does support the link between communication and trust in an organization.

For this reason, it could be argued that when the participants in my own research highlighted the need for honest and transparent communication it could be an insight into an underlying lack of trust between employees. While the participants in my research only mentioned honesty and transparency without directly mentioning the actual word trust, the concepts of honesty and transparency are indeed key variables to an environment of trust as established by researchers and these concepts were revealed as indicators of trust in prior research (Miller, Fitzgerald, Preston & Murrell, 2002; Clarke et al. 2012; Lencioni, 2012; Boies, Fiset & Gill, 2015).

Therefore, I believe this captures the implied importance of trust as an underlying essential concept that emerged for the participants when designing the dream team.

Destiny Stage

The final stage of the workshop was the destiny stage, which required participants to reflect on how they could personally contribute to the success of the dream team. It is this stage where the purpose statement was put into practice with commitments from all participants. Through self-reflection, the participants were asked to identify practices that they should individually and as a team 'do more of', 'do less of', and 'continue to do'.

Everyone agreed to share their thoughts with the rest of the participants with all ideas written on the chart at the front of the room. During these discussions, there were concepts that were repeated by more than one participant, including more honesty and transparency, and less negativity and gossip. Holistically, the team agreed that they have an opportunity to use this information to adjust perspectives and attitudes and to remind one another that their work is for the students.

To visually represent the practices identified for each of the three prompts (do more of, do less of, continue to do), a Wordle™ was created. Wordles™ are word clouds that visually represent the frequency of words as a way to identify common themes quickly. Wordles™ were introduced in 2009 by Viegas, Wattenberg, and Fienberg and have grown in use as a technique to analyze qualitative data (Williams, Lloyd Parkes & Davies, 2013). While a Wordle™ is not considered a thorough analytical tool, researchers have used it as an initial visual representation to initiate additional analysis and have found it useful in conjunction with a mixed methods approach (McNaught & Lam, 2010; Williams, Lloyd Parkes & Davies, 2013). Therefore, I chose to include Wordles™ to complement the additional qualitative analytical methods used in this research. Using the free application on Wordle™.net, the exact text of each participant was entered into the tool and the following word clouds were produced:

Recognizing the detrimental effects of this type of engagement, the participants identified gossiping and overall negativity as actions that they would attempt to fuel less in the workplace in a desire to improve overall satisfaction within the workplace environment. The Appreciative Inquiry framework is designed to drive participants to consider positive, successful ways in which to move an organization forward (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, Cherney & Fry, 2004; Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012) and negativity and workplace gossip were concepts that resonated with the participants as barriers to moving forward. As the participants considered activities and actions that they and the team should 'do less of', negativity and gossip emerged with frequency in the Illustration 4.4 above.

Due to this recognition that negativity and gossip should be removed from colleague interaction, I chose to investigate the literature that addressed negativity and gossip in the workplace. While it is clear that negativity and gossip can be assumed to have detrimental effects, it was interesting to find researchers who were able to articulate the trickle effects of this behavior on the entire organization. In general, both Bagga (2013) and Bhasin (2013) recognized the increase in stress levels for staff caused by gossip, ultimately adversely affecting morale and teamwork, which then often results in staff turnover. Staff turnover can cause disruptions in the operational efficiencies of an organization and eventually lead to a negative impact on productivity (Bhasin, 2013). In addition, Gouveia, Van Vuuren and Crafford (2005) also outlined the effects of workplace gossip on the organization, stating that there is often a loss of control and a loss of trust between management and staff, which can affect the productivity and bottom-line of an institution while Shockley-Zalabak, Morreale, and Hackman (2010) found that gossip flourishes where there is distrust. It is in the best interest of organizations to address negativity and gossip in the workplace in order to avoid unnecessary disruption to productivity. Some suggestions offered by Bagga (2013) and Bhasin (2013) include formal mitigation with human resources leading the initiative. However, Gouveia, Van Vuuren, and Crafford (2005) recognized Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a tool to consider when attempting to address this type of behavior.

With the AI framework, individuals are presented with concepts that allow them to take ownership for their behavior with a positive success-based approach (Center for Appreciative Inquiry, 2011; Cooperrider & Godwin, 2010; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Rather than have a top-down heavy-handed approach, the AI framework encourages open dialogue to investigate the root of issues, ultimately leading to an exposure of inaccurate assumptions, empowering individuals to make a positive change.

This ownership for behavior that is part of the essence of AI was evident in my research as the participants recognized the need to eliminate their negative behaviors in the workplace. Through self-reflection, the participants openly admitted to poor behavior that was driving them to adverse interactions with one another. Just as an increase in honest and transparent communication appear to be foundational to building trust, so is a decline in negativity and gossip (Blomqvist, 1997; Miller, Fitzgerald, Preston & Murrell, 2002; Clarke et al. 2012; Lencioni, 2012; Boies, Fiset & Gill, 2015). Participants in my study were aware of the need to improve honest and transparent communications, although they did not explicitly state that these improvements were needed to foster trust. However, they did recognize the need to dismiss their assumptions of negativity in order to engage with colleagues in a positive manner that could then lead to increases in collaboration between departments.

4.2.2 Findings from photo elicitation exercise

Photo elicitation is a common practice used among qualitative researchers to elicit dialogue about feelings with participants (Harper, 2002; Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Richard & Lahman, 2015). Using imagery, participants were offered an opportunity to select an image that was representative of their thoughts around a particular topic. Providing images for the participants to choose from empowers participants first to make a choice and then to explain their thoughts or feelings leading to that choice of imagery (Richard & Lahman, 2015). The photo elicitation exercise was completed at the end of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop as a way for the participants to debrief the whole experience with one another and share their feelings about the discussions that took place during the day.

The participants were presented with 22 decontextualized images. In some cases, researchers use photographs taken of the participants engaging in the research for the photo elicitation exercise; however, I chose decontextualized images to use for this project as a metaphorical representation of emotions (Richard & Lahman, 2015). Each participant was asked to choose one image that best represented their personal thoughts about the day and their future. Included in the stack was a variety of images that ranged from neutral, positive or negative in perception, in an attempt to allow the participants an opportunity to share their ideas even if they did not walk away with a positive perspective.

All participants made their selections and some of them chose more than one so that they could describe how they felt prior to the workshop versus how they felt at the end of the workshop. The following two examples are illustrative of the feelings portrayed by the participants. One participant chose the image below stating,

“While I know it will be an uphill battle, I am going to work hard to do things with a positive perspective”. Dakota

Illustration 4. 6 Dakota's Photo Selection



A second participant chose two images, one to describe their perspective before the workshop, with the second image chosen to describe their current perspective. The participant felt that prior to the workshop, everyone worked individually and they were not always aware of the environment around them as depicted in Illustration 4.7.

Illustration 4. 7 Jordan's Photo Selection #1



However, because of the workshop, the participant realized the importance of team collaboration to drive the university toward success and chose an image with many people joined together facing a sunrise (Illustration 4.8) to depict the idea that,

“Collaboration and unity were within reach just on the horizon.” Jordan

Illustration 4. 8 Jordan's Photo Selection #2



This particular comment resonated with the rest of the participants as they all nodded in agreement. Collaboration with the team was an important concept for the participants and one that they stated they would seek to display after the workshop.

I found it interesting that in all cases, the images chosen depicted a positive emotional response to the workshop. As the participants described their reasons for choosing each particular image, it was clear that the image also represented their hope for their future. In particular, everyone was hopeful for the future expectations of collaboration in a more positive environment in this organization. Overall, at this point in the data collection process, it was clear that all participants left the workshop with a sense of empowerment over their destiny. For that reason, my initial evaluation found the workshop to be a success with the participants well versed in the framework of Appreciative Inquiry and eager to build upon the foundation established with one another. While the photo elicitation exercise is not a typical way to end an Appreciative Inquiry workshop, I found it to be a concluding exercise that brought the day to a close with celebration and positivity.

4.2.3 Findings from post-workshop evaluation

One week after the Appreciative Inquiry workshop, an evaluation (see Appendix 4.2) was sent to participants via a common online evaluation tool. The evaluation was designed to gauge the effectiveness of the workshop, as well as each participant’s perception of trust within the workplace. All five participants completed the Likert scale evaluation, which contained 19 statements asking participants to indicate their level of agreement with each statement.

There were five types of statements listed on the evaluation with each statement directly linked to the aim of this research. Table 4.5 presents the research question addressed, with the number of corresponding evaluation statements, as well as the percentage of responses that were categorized as agree or strongly agree, neutral or disagree/strongly disagree.

Table 4. 5 Summary of Survey Instrument

Research Question(s)	Type of Statement	% Agree/ Strongly Agree	% Neutral	% Disagree/ Strongly Disagree
Does using the Appreciative Inquiry framework bridge teams and increase cross-departmental collaboration?	Collaboration: 5 statements on evaluation	80%	16%	4%
Does the Appreciative Inquiry framework provide individuals with a renewed outlook and positive hope for the future of the organization?	Institution/ Leadership: 4 statements on evaluation	75%	5%	20%
To what effect (if any) does positive team interaction impact overall team productivity?	Trust/Productivity: 3 statements on evaluation	100%	0%	0%
Does using a positive lens increase levels of trust between individual employees on various teams? What effect (if any) does increased perceptions of trust increase the positive interactions between team members?	Trust: 3 statements on evaluation	67%	20%	13%
How does using Appreciative Inquiry impact trust and collaboration between two inter-related support groups within an Art & Design University?	Trust/ Collaboration: 4 statements on evaluation	75%	15%	10%

In all cases, over 50% of responses indicated that Appreciative Inquiry had made a positive impact on trust, productivity, collaboration and hope for the future. These responses seem to indicate that the participants recognize Appreciative Inquiry as an effective way to influence trust between colleagues, as well as a willingness of the participants to embrace change through a strengths perspective. Again, the impact of the Appreciative Inquiry framework on trust is in line with previous research (Miller, Fitzgerald, Preston and Murrell, 2002; Keefe & Pesut, 2004; Clarke, Werestiuk, Schoffner, Gerard, Swan, Jackson, Steeves & Probizanski, 2012). While these researchers were not necessarily using the Appreciative Inquiry tool as a device to improve perceptions of trust, the concept of trust emerged as a vital element to team collaboration.

There were three specific statements on the post-workshop evaluation directly seeking to uncover the participants' perception of the Appreciative Inquiry framework and the effect on collaboration. As can be seen in Table 4.6, in all cases, 100% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Appreciative Inquiry has had a positive impact on collaboration with colleagues.

Table 4. 6 Collaboration Statements from Survey

Survey Statement	% Agree/Strongly Agree
The Appreciative inquiry workshop provided concrete ways to improve collaboration with my colleagues	100%
If other members of the student services departments engaged in the ideals of Appreciative Inquiry, cross-departmental collaboration would improve	100%
If other members of the student services departments engaged in the ideals of Appreciative Inquiry, cross-departmental collaboration would improve	100%

These responses not only indicate that the Appreciative Inquiry framework was well received by the participants, but that they also directly attribute improvements in collaboration with the concepts learned during the workshop.

In addition, three statements on this evaluation were designed to address the workplace environment and organizational productivity in relation to perceptions of trust. As is seen in Table 4.7, all three statements resulted in all of the respondents agree or strongly agree that trust has a positive impact on productivity.

Table 4. 7 Trust Statements from Survey

Survey Statement	% Agree/Strongly Agree
An environment of trust increases productivity	100%
Trust is linked to productivity	100%
Trust between teammates improves the overall [workplace] experience	100%

These findings indicate that the participants recognize trust as an important factor for both collaboration and productivity; however, the agreement with the survey statements only indicates awareness of the need for trust and does not provide evidence that the participants were behaving in a way that improved trust. The workshop evaluation simply gauged the participant’s perspective on these concepts of trust, collaboration, and productivity. It is in the additional data collected during the interviews and journals that I was able to evaluate if the participants were truly putting these concepts into practice.

4.3 Phase 2: Qualitative Findings

4.3.1 Findings from individual interviews

Participants were asked to engage in an individual interview one month after the workshop. All five of the participants agreed to an interview, with interviews taking place during the workday in a private room located in the library. The participants were provided an opportunity to engage with one another using the concepts learned during the workshop for one month, and to then share their thoughts and reflect on the effectiveness of the workshop through private conversation in a semi-structure interview. All participants were asked the same questions and the interviews varied from 10 to 45 minutes in duration.

Three main areas of inquiry were addressed during the interviews including; elements of Appreciative Inquiry that resonated, changes in trust between teammates, and the future of the organization in light of Appreciative Inquiry (see Appendix 3.6 for full interview guide). These areas were addressed through questions that allowed the participants to share their personal reaction to the Appreciative Inquiry framework and articulate ways in which they were able to implement some of these concepts. The questions also required the participants to reflect on how, or if, the Appreciative Inquiry concepts influenced trust as they interacted with colleagues. Finally, the participants were asked to share thoughts around their perceptions of the future of the organization and the potential impact of Appreciative Impact on the broader university.

Elements of Appreciative Inquiry that Resonated

In all cases, the participants were able to identify aspects of the workshop that resonated with them personally. They were asked to describe how they have been able to incorporate the concepts introduced at the workshop as they performed their jobs. All participants were able to share multiple experiences during the one month following the workshop where they were able to practice the concepts learned during the workshop, with a positive result in all cases.

“I really liked moving out of the deficit perspective – in this culture that is prevalent. If I take time to reflect, I can see how far things have come in 3 years – and then the deficits go way down in perspective!” Jordan

“The whole idea of team collaboration – I guess I felt like as a group of individuals that we are already working toward that – like with orientation – we are working with people outside of our department for one common goal.” Harper

“We had a project that was presented to us regarding upcoming graduates that was not sustainable. I countered with an alternative solution rather than just ‘no – I don’t want to do this’. The alternative solution was eagerly accepted.” Bailey

These participant perspectives indicate that the Appreciative Inquiry concepts of a strengths-based approach to solutions, orientated around collaboration is achievable in this environment.

Change in Trust

The participants were also asked to gauge if there were any improvements in trust because of the knowledge received during the workshop. One participant was quite vocal about the lack of trust and the misleading information this individual perceived during the workshop. After several minutes of probing questions to try to draw out the reasons behind this perspective, it became clear that the individual was struggling to initiate any of the Appreciative Inquiry concepts because the direct leader of the department did not participate in the workshop. This participant felt that had the leader of the department participated in the workshop, then the support would have been there to initiate some of these concepts. This individual very clearly stated that they did not view this tool as an organic framework that could be implemented from the ‘bottom, up’; rather, insisted that leadership must be aware of and supportive of these concepts in order for the ideas to affect the workplace.

“I wish senior leadership would have been involved in the discussions because it is a top down [framework]. [This] culture needs to come from the leader and the leader was not involved with this at all.” Riley

It is true that this framework can and has been used as a tool for managers to apply the Appreciative Inquiry concepts to impact the workplace positively (Johnson, 2010; McCaffery, 2010; Tracy, 2010; Camargo-Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013). However, prior research does indeed suggest that this tool may affect workplace cultures from the bottom-up simply through employee engagement, without forced direction from the leader (Bushe & Kassam 2005; Reijerse, van Domburg, 2010; Roberts, 2013) and that through education, employees can become empowered to own their actions and interactions with colleagues. I was unable to identify any research to indicate that this framework was only effective with leadership participation. However, this participant’s perspective of leadership involvement did cause me to consider the role leaders play in the development of teams. Even though leaders were deliberately excluded from this research, as discussed in the methodology chapter, based on this one participant’s expression of dissatisfaction with a lack of leadership involvement, I chose to adjust one of the journal prompts to elicit additional context regarding this issue from all the participants. More details can be found in the journals finding section (4.2.5).

Other participants were more positive in their perspective and were able to share an experience that reflected an improvement in trust, specifically regarding honest and transparent communications. Two participants reflected on the way in which honesty had impacted the communication between team members.

“I know that we do trust each other more and we share more freely – we can be more honest with each other and then we can get over it. That hasn’t always been the case with that team.” Jordan

“I’m starting to be more open and receptive and share my ideas. I’m learning good conflict – and part of Appreciative Inquiry touches on this with team collaboration and other departments because you will need to find a way to resolve differences without taking things personally – need to be able to take constructive criticism.” Harper

The participant who articulated difficulty in implementing any of the Appreciative Inquiry concepts shared an example of an attempt at transparent communication:

“We’ve tried, when building trust and transparency, we have tried as a team to cc each other in emails, but what happened is we’ve taken some baby steps.” Riley

This individual went on to explain that sometimes the wrong people are cc’d on emails. While the intention is to have open, transparent communication, if the right people are not receiving the email, then the perception can be the exact opposite of transparency. Rather than assume the sender of the email is trying to be transparent, an assumption is made that the sender of the email was intentionally leaving people off the email. This participant shared an experience with transparent communication that appears to need some additional refining in order to become effective; however, regardless of the success found in this particular experience, the participant did seem to recognize the importance of transparent communication when building trust.

Future of the Organization

Most participants, when asked about the future of the organization were eager to claim a positive perspective. They discussed change and the rapidity of change in the organization and if members of the university are willing to embrace change as an opportunity, then it can have a great impact on the overall morale of the university. In addition, three of the five participants stated that they believed that Appreciative Inquiry had a positive impact and wished that more individuals could have participated from throughout the university.

“Appreciative Inquiry makes me believe we could have more harmonious relationships with change than what we do. I think I was disappointed that there were not more people able to participate. I think it would have been more impactful.” Jordan

“I think Appreciative Inquiry have caused things to be more student centered.” Harper

“I typically have a pretty positive outlook but I feel that if we could more broadly implement the Appreciative Inquiry concepts it would be helpful in a lot more areas.” Dakota

These comments implied a positive perspective on the AI workshop and the concepts learned during the discussions; however, there appears to have also been a desire to share these concepts with the broader campus.

In general, the interviews provided an excellent opportunity for the participants to reflect on the Appreciative Inquiry concepts and then articulate how they were able to initiate or see these concepts in action. While one participant did not have a positive outlook due to the lack of leader involvement, all others were grateful for the concepts learned and recognized ways that their transparent communications and actions affected how they trust one another, which then leads to how they collaborate with one another. One month after the workshop, the interviews suggested that the participants continued to have a positive perspective about the concepts learned in the workshop and were seeking out ways to put these ideas into practice with their colleagues.

4.3.2 Findings from participant journals

All five of the participants were asked to complete journals for two months after the completion of the workshop to evaluate the continued effectiveness of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop and to determine if any of the concepts discussed during the workshop continued to affect the workplace. The participants were presented with one journal prompt at a time with a requested completion date one week later. There was a total of two journal prompts. Unfortunately, the request for journals took place during a busy part of the recruitment cycle and it was difficult to get the participants to respond. As they were volunteering their time to assist with this research, I patiently waited for their responses with gentle reminders for completion. Researchers recognize the difficulty in obtaining compliance with journal submissions (Otienoh, 2009; Hayman, Wilkes, & Jackson, 2012; Thomas, 2015). This is typically due to a lack of time, but can also be attributable to a discomfort with exposing feelings to the researcher (Otienoh, 2009; Hayman, Wilkes & Jackson, 2012; Thomas, 2015).

Recommendations to alleviate this difficulty in obtaining journals include structured time as well as finding ways to increase the participant's sense of safety, by reassuring participants that their responses are anonymous (Otienoh, 2009; Hayman, Wilkes & Jackson, 2012). I did ensure participants understood that their participation in all aspects of this research would remain anonymous on the Participant Information Sheet; however, it may have been helpful to remind the participants of this prior to the request for journal submissions. Unfortunately, I was unable to provide structured time for the participants to complete the journals. Future research should consider ways to integrate structured time for participants to dedicate to journal completions, as well as to consider ways to ensure comfort with the exposure of feelings.

Of the five participants in this study, four of the participants completed the first prompt and three of the participants completed the second prompt. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the journal responses were analyzed for emergent themes. A sample of this type of analysis is found below in Table 4.8

Table 4. 8 Sample of IPA analysis used on journal submissions

Journal Prompt #1: <i>In light of the Appreciative Inquiry framework, describe two moments of collaboration with campus colleagues from the past few weeks. Was the interaction positive or negative? In what way? In hindsight, would you have made any changes to the interaction?</i>				
Emergent Categories	Exploratory Comments regarding the impact of AI	Exploratory Comments	Exploratory Perspective of Original Transcript	Original Transcript
Jordan: Moment #1				
Trust	AI Positive Impact on Trust	Jordan recognized a relationship that historically has had moments of difficulty. Jordan purposefully recognized a positive contribution to the universities efforts. It caused Jordan to regret not seeking out additional opportunities for positive interaction.	Positive	I had a very positive interaction with Tyler before [Tyler] left the university.
			Distrust	[Tyler] and I always had light and fun social interactions but had moments of conflict professionally.
			Distrust	We both have strong personalities and ‘turf’ issues...let’s leave it at that]
			Positive	I appreciated the fact that Tyler arranged to stay through the accreditation visit, and that [Tyler] was completely professional throughout the mock sessions and the visit.
			Positive	I expressed this to [Tyler] and told [Tyler] it was a classy move on [Tyler’s] part.
			Positive	I was able to sincerely wish [Tyler] well in this new chapter.
			Neutral	In hindsight, I wouldn’t make changes to that interaction.
			Distrust	But I realized how much I was restricting my daily interactions with [Tyler] out of fear of an unpleasant experience.
			Positive	Following the positive interaction, I regretted NOT (participant’s emphasis) seeking out more opportunities to have positive interactions with [Tyler] these past few months.

Journal Prompt 1:

In light of the Appreciative Inquiry framework, describe two moments of collaboration with campus colleagues from the past few weeks. Was the interaction positive or negative? In what way? In hindsight, would you have made any changes to the interaction?

When asked to identify two moments of collaboration with colleagues, all participants reflected upon a positive experience. Based on the journal responses, the collaborative moments were reflective of perceived levels of trust as described by the participants. Two of the four respondents recognized that prior to the interaction there was limited trust or a preconceived assumption that the interaction would be negative.

“Tyler and I always had light and fun social interactions but had moments of conflict professionally. But I realized how much I was restricting my daily interactions with her out of fear of an unpleasant experience. Following the positive interaction, I regretted NOT (their emphasis) seeking out more opportunities to have positive interactions with her these past few months.” Jordan

“If I could make a change, I would have brought this matter to the department’s attention earlier. I have not always had some positive experiences asking the department for help but I feel like they were eager to assist in a more hands-on manner than I had been expecting. In the future, I will attempt to engage with departments without allowing myself to consider past experiences as a hindrance and embrace them more neutrally.” Bailey

While none of the respondents directly linked these moments of collaboration to the Appreciative Inquiry workshop, the two respondents who expected negative interaction recognized an opportunity for future positive collaboration, which is an integral component of AI.

As was recognized during the destiny stage of the workshop, these participants identified the need to be more aware of their preconceived notions of negativity and recognized the need to eliminate these ideas in order to work collaboratively with colleagues.

Journal Prompt 2:

Originally, I intended to ask the participants to reflect further on how they were incorporating the purpose statement (as developed during the design stage of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop) into their daily interactions with students and staff. However, based on information gathered during individual interviews, which took place with the participants shortly after the submission of the first journal, I chose to change the second journal prompt to ask about leader participation in the workshop. I decided to ask participants to reflect on the role of leadership, specifically asking if leaders should have been present at the workshop.

Should leaders of functional areas have been present at the Appreciative Inquiry workshop? Why or Why not?

Of the three individuals who submitted a journal for the second prompt, only two participants wholeheartedly agreed that the leaders should be exposed to the Appreciative Inquiry concepts. One particular individual thought it would provide leaders with insight into the dedication of their employees and fuel each leader's desire to contribute to positivity. Based on these responses, it appears that the participants have a sense of trust in the leader of this department and are not hesitant to share honestly and openly with the leader.

"Functional leaders should have been present at the workshop. Leaders would have been able to see the genuine dedication of their 'troops'. It might have inspired the leaders." Riley

“From my brief experience with Appreciative Inquiry, I feel it would be VERY (their emphasis) beneficial for leaders of functional areas to participate, be directly involved in the process, and experience the benefits of this framework.” Jordan

However, there was also an acknowledgement that if leaders participate there is a fear of hindering honest conversation.

“My concern if leaders had been present would be that individuals would be less forthcoming and outright and answer in a way that would be pleasing to their directors, rather than answering frankly.” Bailey

“It might be advisable to hold a separate session for team leaders, rather than have them in the workshop with direct reports. Having the ‘boss’ in the session may influence the level of sharing on both sides.” Jordan

This might imply a lack of trust for leadership; however, both participants did recommend a post-workshop conversation (or a second workshop) that would provide participants an opportunity to share the discussion that took place with leadership.

“We might as well also propose a joint session or additional workshop with leaders and direct reports together. This session could focus on implementing the AI framework effectively.” Jordan

“I could see the value in a follow-up session where answers from the initial workshop would be discussed generically with leaders of all functional areas with the participants in the workshop. This way, in follow-up discussions, individuals who felt comfortable could explain their point of view, how the decision was made, etc. while individuals who were not comfortable discussing could just listen and discuss with the group.” Bailey

Based on these responses, it can be implied that the employees saw the benefit of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop and the potential impact on the organization; however there seemed to be a feeling that more honest responses could be made without their direct manager present. It appears as though there is recognition that the Appreciative Inquiry workshop provided value to the employees with the concepts learned during the workshop contributing to the development of trusting relationships between colleagues. However, I was able to uncover that there is concern that in order for these concepts to integrate effectively into the culture of a department there must be approval and 'buy-in' from the functional leaders.

The concept of leadership was one that was investigated during the literature review. The theory of transformational leadership emerged as a theory that links well with the Appreciative Inquiry framework. According to McCaffery (2010), this theory is aimed at inspiring behaviors in employees, transforming behavior from an externally motivated drive toward an internal drive seeking to do good work for the improvement of the organization. Gardiner (2006) and Lencioni (2012) both claim that this type of leadership is best achieved through genuine interaction, open communication and nurturing an environment of honesty and transparency between leader and employee. In fact, Boies, Fiset, and Gill (2015) found that transformational leadership traits were directly attributable to an increase in communication, which led to an increase in trust and productivity. It is when leaders model the behaviors that they expect of their employees that employees then begin to reflect those behaviors in their own actions (Lencioni, 2012). These ideas were reflected in the participants' comments regarding leadership participation in the workshops. The participants recognized that the leaders must be aware of these concepts in order for them to be effective, and researchers (Gardiner, 2006; Lencioni, 2012) recognize that the leader must model expected behaviors of employees. The combination of these ideas seems to indicate that there should be some level of participation from leaders, either at the workshop or at a follow-up workshop so that they can be aware of the dialogue and encourage employees to interact in a manner that is reflective of the Appreciative Inquiry concepts.

Based on this unexpected discovery of leader participation, I sought to uncover prior examples of the Appreciative Inquiry framework being used to impact trust between leaders and employees. Only one study was found that indirectly used the Appreciative Inquiry framework as a way to develop trust between a new leader and the individuals in the department (Keefe and Pesut, 2004). However, the Appreciative Inquiry framework was not discussed in a workshop setting; rather, it was a yearlong journey of indirectly applying the Appreciative Inquiry concepts as the new leader interacted with members of the team.

I did, however, find research that discussed the dynamic between leader and employee during workshops in general, not necessarily an Appreciative Inquiry workshop. Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1997) researched the effectiveness of workshops when both the leader and employee were present. Typically, workshops are intended to provide educational professional development opportunities to employees and by their very nature, workshops are designed to be interactive. Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1997) claim that employees typically enter a workshop playing their particular role in the organization and it is unrealistic to assume that individuals can remove themselves from the roles they hold when they enter a workshop. In reality, individuals cannot remove themselves from their role or the political environment in which they work. As a result, these relationship dynamics are still in existence during a workshop and can affect the intended teaching and learning that is expected to take place. Participants are expected to interact with one another, but the power dynamic between a leader and employee in the same workshop can affect the level of engagement of employees (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1997). If workshops are going to be effective, there must be consideration given to the relationship dynamics between the participants. For this reason, I believe that one of the participant's suggestions to have a separate workshop for leaders is probably a preferred method to ensure power dynamics are not affecting the workshop, yet this method will still provide leaders with the same professional development opportunity. Nevertheless, it is still reasonable to argue that leaders and employees can engage together during a workshop and Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1997) did offer some recommendations to consider if conducting a workshop with both leaders and employees present.

These recommendations included monitoring interactions and modeling the behavior expected of the participants, similar expectations as that of the transformational leader (Gardiner, 2006; McCaffery, 2010; Lencioni, 2012; Boies, Fiset, & Gill, 2015). If the workshop leader is aware of the dynamic and can conduct the workshop with the traits of a transformational leader, then there is the potential for a successful result.

4.4 Phase 1 and 2 Findings Summary

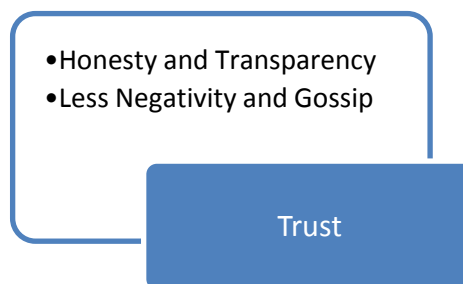
The qualitative data collected included data from four stages of the workshop, a photo elicitation exercise, post-workshop survey, individual interviews, and journals. Each of the data elements was scrutinized for common categories and themes highlighted by the participants using an IPA approach. Categories identified through using IPA across the various data gathered are shown in Table 4.9:

Table 4. 9 Phase 1 and 2 Data Collection Categories

Data Collection Method	Categories Identified
Workshop: Discovery stage	Team dynamics/Collaboration, Student Focus, Sense of Purpose, Personal
Workshop: Dream stage	Attitudinal concepts, Operational concepts
Workshop: Design stage	Purpose statement focused on the student
Workshop: Destiny stage	Students, Honesty, Transparency
Photo Elicitation	Positive emotions, Hope for the future
Evaluation	Collaboration, Institution/Leadership, Trust/Productivity, Trust, Trust/Collaboration
Interviews	Trust, Collaboration, Change
Journal	Collaboration, Improvements in trust

The most common theme that emerged from these categories was a desire to improve honest and transparent communication with less negativity and gossip, all concepts that imply significance toward an environment of trust as depicted in Diagram 4.2 below. In fact, mistrust appeared twice for participants as an underlying cause for why certain actions were chosen or not chosen.

Diagram 4. 2 Elements of Trust



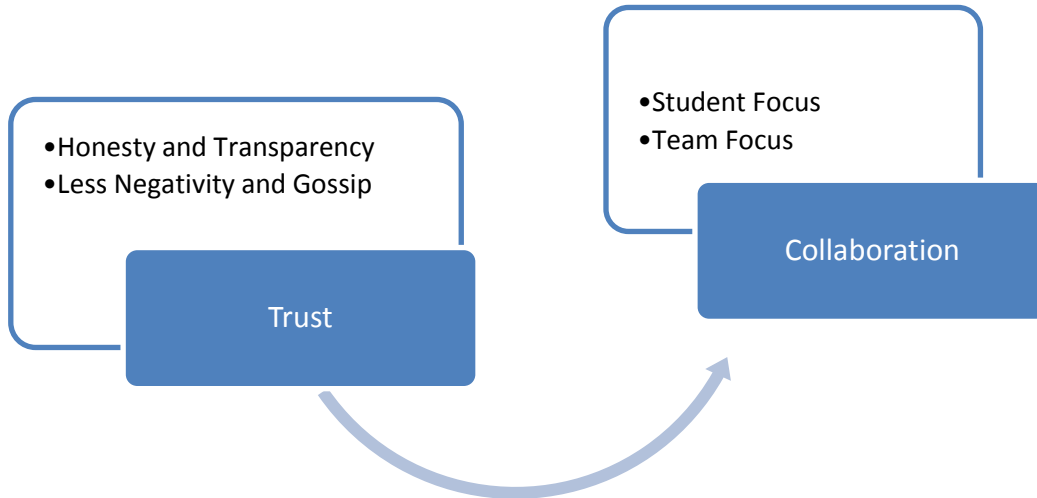
Throughout the stages of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop, concepts of honesty, transparency and less negativity and gossip were highlighted explicitly as important elements in the work environment. Concepts of a trusting environment emerged from the very beginning discovery stage of the workshop, where all members engaged in partner dialogues to share past experiences that resonated with them as employees. As all participants were sharing the successes of these prior experiences, most of the experiences described included environments where honest and transparent communication existed which fostered a climate of trust. Closely linked to the idea of honest and transparent communication is the need to eliminate negativity and workplace gossip. The participants recognized these ideas as important elements to success, not only with their prior experiences but also with their future work in the organization.

This theme of honesty and transparency as an element of trust is reflective of the literature reviewed for this research endeavor. Calabrese, Cohen and Miller (2013), found that positivity and transparency were key to shifting from a negative to a positive workplace environment.

As individuals learned how to communicate openly and with transparency, trust began to develop between employees and as a result, perceptions of trust increased. Transparent and honest communication was also a key finding in the research conducted by Clarke et al. (2012). Clarke et al. (2012) used Appreciative Inquiry in a nursing environment to improve the process that was occurring during patient hand-offs between shifts. During the discovery stage of an AI workshop, participants realized the key to successful hand-offs was clear, precise and transparent communication. Johnson (2010) also recognizing the impact of transparent communication used the concepts of Appreciative Inquiry to foster appreciative communication about a difficult topic in a classroom. Through this positive type of communication, the individuals in Johnson's (2010) study were able to articulate clearly and honestly their thoughts without fueling negativity during the discussion.

Honesty and transparency through open communication and dialogue without negativity or workplace gossip resonated as a key element to building trust for the participants in my study. The Appreciative Inquiry workshop raised awareness of the participants to these key ingredients as necessary to foster trust, which then encouraged the participants to seek out ways to engage in this purposeful communication with colleagues. The elements of trust that were uncovered in the data were closely linked with the idea of collaboration. In both the interviews and the journals, the participants recognized that their prior lack of collaboration was due to perceptions of negativity, which implied a lack of trust. Two participants confessed to avoiding interaction with colleagues due to prior negative experiences; however, after being exposed to the Appreciative Inquiry framework, they sought out opportunities to collaborate on behalf of the student, resulting in surprisingly pleasant experiences. Diagram 4.3 illustrates the way in which collaboration starts with an environment of trust.

Diagram 4. 3 Elements of Collaboration



When individuals focus on honest and transparent communication that is void of negativity and workplace gossip, trust is developed. It is due to this trust with one another that there is an openness to collaborate. In this study, the participants recognized that the collaboration brought out two areas of focus, the student, and the team. In addition to collaborating to ensure a good student experience, the participants were also very aware of the need to collaborate in order to ensure operational efficiencies, which affect productivity that then, in turn, affects the student experience. It was due to a willingness to dismiss prior experiences of negativity that the participants were able to share experiences of collaboration that, prior to the workshop, they did not experience.

Researchers often list trust as the foundational ingredient to effective team collaboration, which then results in overall organizational productivity (Gardiner, 2006; McCaffery, 2010; Tracy, 2010; Calabrese, Cohen, and Miller, 2013; Harmon, 2013; Shockley-Zalabak, Morreale, Hackman, 2015; Pettersen Buvik & Rolfson, 2015; Cuevas, Julkenen & Gabrielsson, 2015; Boies, Fiset & Gill, 2015).

In fact, Harmon (2013) recognized that trust is the key element required of collaborating teams. Without trust, communication can break down; leading to the negativity and workplace gossip that has a detrimental effect on productivity (Bhasin, 2013; Gouveia, Van Vuuren and Crafford 2005). Participants in this study took a step toward trust by acting on behalf of the student when they attempted to collaborate with departments that historically had poor interactions. Due to their willingness to engage with one another, they found themselves involved in a positive experience. This aligns with the research conducted by Nienaber, Hofeditz and Romeike (2015) that defined a theoretical framework of trust founded on vulnerability. It is only when an individual is willing to dismiss previous negativity and vulnerably attempt to engage with positivity that trust can be built (Lencioni, 2012; Nienaber, Hofeditz & Romeike, 2015). This is also true of the dynamic between leader and employee. When a leader is able to expose themselves in a vulnerable manner, the leader is able to establish a sense of trust with employees. Interestingly, Lencioni (2012) claims that this vulnerable interaction should come from the top down. When leaders model vulnerable interaction with employees, then employees are much more likely to trust their leaders and, in turn, engage with fellow employees in a similar manner. The notion of trust starting with leaders could provide an argument for leader participation in the Appreciative Inquiry workshops. Perhaps a pre-assessment to determine the level of trust that exists between leader and employee before the workshop could help ascertain if leader participation would hinder or facilitate discussion.

Throughout the qualitative findings, trust and collaboration were most often identified as a necessary requirement to effectively influence productivity and meet the needs of the student, as well as the team. The next section will focus on the quantitative findings and determine if the results are supportive of the ideas around trust, collaboration, and productivity that emerged during the qualitative phase.

4.5 Phase 3: Quantitative Findings

Following the qualitative data collection period, the quantitative data were collected during a one-month period, approximately three months after the Appreciative Inquiry workshop. The two student support departments continued to interact daily at this point in the recruitment cycle, with a heavy emphasis on the registration of new students to the school. The quantitative data did not require direct input from the participants, but rather the participants were aware that this portion of the research would be gathered independently through my observation and institutional data.

4.5.1 Findings from record sheets

During the quantitative phase of data collection, I received institutional approval to observe participant interactions, on a non-participant basis, during meetings. With the use of a simple record sheet (see Appendix 4.3), the number of positive versus negative comments made during meetings was logged. As this required an element of subjectivity, the definition of positive and negative as provided by the Merriam-Webster (January 11, 2015) dictionary was used to guide determination.

Positive:

- Good or useful
- Thinking about the good qualities of someone or something
- Thinking that a good result will happen
- Hopeful or optimistic

Negative:

- Harmful or bad
- Not wanted
- Thinking about the bad qualities of someone or something
- Thinking that a bad result will happen
- Not hopeful or optimistic

I attended eight different meetings, which included at least one of the research participants. The research participants were interacting with a variety of members of the university from other departments during these meetings; however, the comments recorded were limited to only those comments made by the research participants.

Overall, there were 88 comments, either positive or negative, made during these meetings, with 73% of the comments defined as positive. Table 4.10 shows the comparison of total comments with a percentage.

Table 4. 10 Type of comments made during meetings

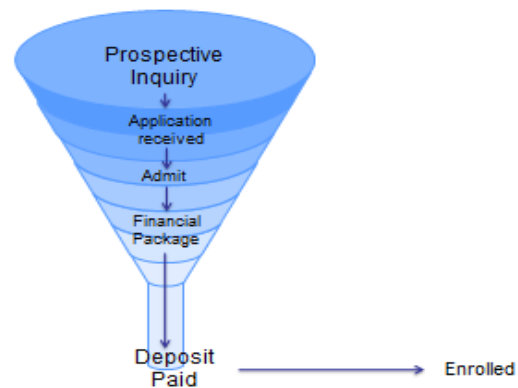
Type of Comment	N = 88	% of Total
Total # Positive		
Comments	64	73%
Total # Negative		
Comments	24	27%

The negative comments were typically sarcastic in nature and were often made with a light-hearted intent; however, in an effort to remain consistent with the dictionary definitions, these comments were coded as negative. The amount of positive interactions (n=64) far outnumbered the amount of negative interactions (n=24). Based on the high percentage of positive comments, there seemed an indication that the participants were putting in an effort to focus on a positive perspective in each of the meetings, indicating that the participants were putting some of the concepts of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop into practice, specifically during times of team collaboration. This complements the findings of the qualitative data, as there was a consistent acknowledgment from the participants that the Appreciative Inquiry concepts had made a positive impact on their ability to collaborate with individuals from other departments.

4.5.2 Findings from productivity metrics

The second type of quantitative data collected consisted of a variety of metrics used by the institution with full permission to use these data in my research. The type of data reviewed was reflective of the stages a prospective student completes during the enrollment process (see Diagram 4.4 below).

Diagram 4. 4 Enrollment Stages



The funnel represents the reduction in student counts as students' progress (or don't progress) through the process. For example, the institution receives approximately 15,000 inquiries or requests for information from students, but approximately 1,500 of those students will actually submit an application. Of the 1,500 who submit an application, approximately 800 complete their submission and are reviewed for admission to the school. Activity at each enrollment stage is described in Table 4.11 below.

Table 4. 11 Enrollment stages activity

Enrollment Stages	Stage Activity
Prospective Inquiry	Student expresses interest in institution
Application Received	Student submits the application to the institution
Admit	Student submits supplementary documents and is reviewed for admission to the school
Financial Package	Student submits Free Application for Federal Student Aid and received financial aid award
Deposits Paid	Student pays deposit to reserve place in the incoming class
Enrolled	Student registers for classes

Each week, members of the leadership team and representation of key functional areas review the progress of students through each stage. The total numbers at each stage are compared against last year's performance. During the meeting, the team highlights areas of success and improvements over previous years and addresses concerns if there is a decline in numbers. By reviewing the data on a weekly basis, the team has an opportunity to address issues quickly. For example, if there were a reduction in the number of applications submitted, then the team would immediately deploy a campaign to encourage the submission of applications, such as waiving the \$50 application fee. In addition to looking for areas that need improvements, the team also acknowledges concerning trends at each stage. If budgeted enrollment goals do not appear achievable, then the team will use these data to re-forecast a new expected enrollment count.

Various departments are responsible for the activities that take place at each enrollment stage. In order for the progression of students to occur seamlessly, departments must collaborate with one another with clear communication about each student. Historically, this has been an area of concern for the institution and actually served as the stimulus for my study.

If not all departments are forthcoming with their communication, it can affect the student in a negative manner. During the weekly metric reviews, it has been common to uncover deterrents in the student's progression through each stage. These deterrents can be as simple as a system issue that prevents seamless process flows for the student, with other issues being a result of inter-departmental communication problems.

Each year there is an expectation that improvements will be made in each stage, ultimately leading to an increase in new student enrollment. The data collected for this research was conducted during April 2015, three months after the Appreciative Inquiry workshop and five months prior to the start of the next semester. The data reported is a snapshot of the activity reported at the end of April 2015. The 2014 historical data were retrieved on the same point in time as the 2015 data.

During the month of April, all departments have a heightened awareness of new enrollments progressing through each gate and productivity is analyzed closely. Unfortunately, based on the comparison of these metrics between the two years, the number of students still engaged in the enrollment cycle began to decline at the point of contact with the financial aid department. During discussions in the metrics meetings, it was revealed that the financial aid department was not providing the expected level of customer service needed during this high volume time. Due to a lack of leadership in the financial aid department (the department was without a director for many months and was conducting a search to fill the position), temporary employees stepped in to provide additional support. Table 4.12 provides productivity metrics at each gate with a year-over-year comparison.

Table 4. 12 Productivity Metrics

Productivity Metrics			
Enrollment Stage	2014	2015	% change
Applications	1,489	1,890	27%
Admitted	559	652	17%
Financial Aid	427	395	-7%
Deposits	232	224	-3%
Registered	81	43	-47%

Unfortunately, the decline in productivity occurred with a department that did not participate in this research and were not exposed to the concepts of Appreciative Inquiry. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if there was any increase in productivity with this particular set of data. As the Appreciative Inquiry concepts appear to have made a positive impact on collaboration and trust with the participants, ultimately leading to an effect on productivity, it may be worth exposing additional departments to these concepts in the future.

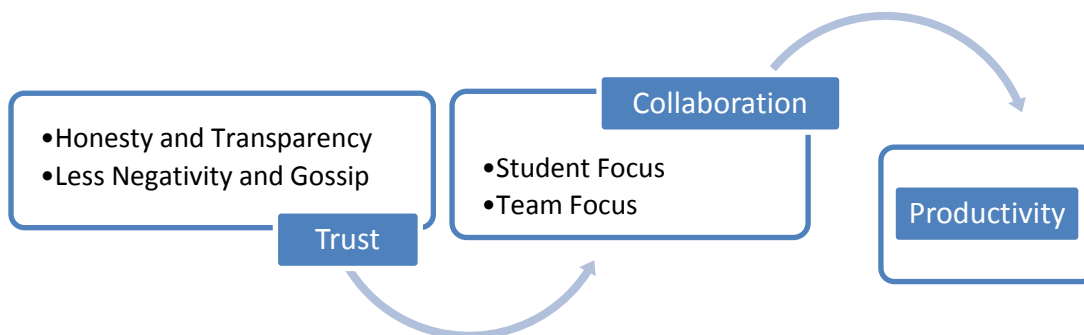
4.6 Phase 3 Findings Summary

The quantitative data collected included both record logs of positive and negative interactions during meetings, as well as productivity metrics that are used to analyze improvements in performance at each enrollment stage. The meeting record sheets indicate a positive connection with the Appreciative Inquiry concepts and the impact these concepts had on the interaction between the research participants and other members of the university. With a large percentage of the comments positive in nature, the impact on collaboration and ultimately trust are more likely to occur.

The institutional metrics did not clearly indicate a positive connection with improvements in productivity and the Appreciative Inquiry concepts. While there was an increase year-over-year in the number of applications and admitted students to the university, there was a decline in performance at the point of contact with the financial aid department. There are many factors that could influence this drop in performance, including a lack of leadership for the financial aid department at this particular point in time. Unfortunately, the institution had difficulty recovering from this drop at the financial aid stage, resulting in a decline in the number of students willing to pay deposits and register for classes from the previous year. Members of the financial aid team were invited to participate in this research; however, due to time constraints declined the invitation. Had the members of the financial aid team participated in the Appreciative Inquiry workshop, there may have been a heightened awareness of the student experience. This heightened awareness may have increased desire to collaborate with other departments, which may have affected the outcome of this data.

The themes of trust and collaboration culminated with a focus on productivity. Just as trust is closely linked, and leads to, collaboration, the combination of trust and collaboration leads to a healthy work environment, job satisfaction and productivity (Lencioni, 2012). Diagram 4.5 provides a visual representation of the path toward productivity.

Diagram 4. 5 Path to Productivity

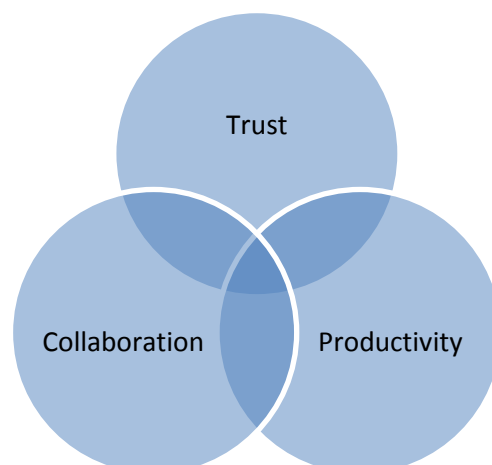


While productivity was not directly discussed during the workshop, interviews or journals, there was an implication, due to the improvements in trust and collaboration that individuals will work together in a more seamless manner, which then leads to organizational productivity. In fact, according to Harmon (2013) collaboration and trust in the workplace are directly linked to satisfaction, which can potentially influence overall employee productivity. Many of the participants directly linked trust with productivity and as a result, satisfaction with their employment and a positive, hopeful outlook for the future of the organization. Cameron et al. (2011) and Karakas (2009) describe the importance of positivity on organizational performance and job satisfaction, with Karakas (2009) suggesting that Appreciative Inquiry is an effective tool to improve positivity in the workplace. While the quantitative data did not clearly show improvements in productivity with the institutional metrics, the record sheets did indicate positive interactions especially during activities that required team collaboration. With expanded participation with other departments, it is hypothesized that the Appreciative Inquiry concepts would make a positive contribution to trust and collaboration, leading to improvements in the overall productivity of the organization.

4.7 Summary

Throughout all data collected, three themes emerged that resonated with the participants, trust, collaboration and productivity. Diagram 4.6 illustrates the way in which these three themes are integrated and overlap with one another.

Diagram 4. 6 Emergent Themes



While concepts of honesty and transparency, leading to trust did emerge most often in the data, it was very closely linked to how individuals chose to collaborate. Successful collaboration ultimately leads to how individuals measure job satisfaction affecting organizational productivity.

The majority of the ideas found in the data collected centered on concepts of trust and collaboration. This began during the workshop, as ways to improve trust and collaboration through the Appreciative Inquiry framework were identified. Specifically, concepts of honesty, transparency, and less negativity and workplace gossip were elements of trust that then leads to collaboration. Not only were these concepts reflective of prior successful employment that contributed to job satisfaction, but the importance of these concepts in their current environment were discovered by the participants as they engaged in the Appreciative Inquiry workshop. The workshop illuminated the importance of these concepts for the participants and forced a purposeful approach to interaction between colleagues. The participants continued to share experiences of these Appreciative Inquiry concepts in practice during the two months following the workshop as they articulated their experiences during the individual interviews and in the reflective journals. The impact of trust and collaboration continued, as there is evidence to suggest that the Appreciative Inquiry concepts can affect the overall productivity of the participants. The record sheets revealed a continued practice of the Appreciative Inquiry concepts with successful meetings fueled by positive interactions, with the indication that with broader participation, productivity could increase campus-wide. These data indicate a positive relationship between the Appreciative Inquiry framework and the impact on trust and collaboration, leading to productivity for the five participants in this study.

Chapter Five: Conclusion, Limitations and Implications for Practice

5.1 Review of the Aim of the Research

As stated earlier, the aim of this research was to determine whether the use of the Appreciative Inquiry framework has any effect(s) on the development of trust and collaboration between two student support departments. The data collected was intended to investigate if an improvement in trust between cross-departmental collaborations would ultimately lead to an increase in productivity. The qualitative data collected during this process permitted insight into (a) the connection between the use of Appreciative Inquiry and the development of trust, (b) collaboration between departments using Appreciative Inquiry and (c) perceptions of trust and collaboration. The quantitative data collected was intended to support the qualitative data and to identify if perceptions of trust may have influenced productivity and a combined ownership for results.

Research questions

The main research question, *How does using Appreciative Inquiry impact trust and team development between two inter-related support groups within an Art & Design University?*, was addressed through all data collected. Specifically, this question was addressed throughout the stages of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop. Members of two student support departments participated in the workshop and continued to practice these concepts during their regular workplace interactions three months after the workshop. Both the individual interviews and the journal submissions revealed a positive impact on trust with specific examples presented by the participants. In addition, the quantitative data collected through the meeting record sheets also indicated a continued impact on the positive interactions between the participants and other members of the institution.

The Appreciative Inquiry framework also increased cross-departmental collaboration for the participants in this research. Of the eight pieces of data collected during the qualitative phase, four of those data highlighted collaboration as a common theme among the participants.

During the Appreciative Inquiry workshop, collaboration was identified as a desired component of the workplace and one that was necessary for productivity. Following the workshop, when asked during the individual interview if the participants were able to use the Appreciative Inquiry concepts, many participants indicated that these concepts were used specifically for collaboration between other departments. In all cases, the participants provided examples of an increase in collaboration with members outside of their immediate team and the positive results of that interaction. In addition, during the interviews three of the five participants explicitly expressed a desire to have other members of the institution exposed to the Appreciative Inquiry concepts. By indicating that others would also benefit from the workshop, there is an implication that the participants benefited from the workshop and feel as though the concepts would also improve others' sense of trust and collaboration at the institution.

In addition to the main research question, there were five additional sub-questions. Each of these sub-questions sought to investigate further the impact of Appreciative Inquiry specifically as it related to cross-departmental collaborations, increases in trust between employees and increases in positive interactions between team members. These questions culminated with the expectation that increases in trust, collaboration, and positive interactions could possibly lead to an increase in productivity. In fact, the main themes identified in the findings and discussion section highlighted trust, collaboration and productivity as three main ideas that resonated with the participants throughout this research, indicating a connection between the application of the Appreciative Inquiry concepts and the impact made in each area. Each participant was able to articulate ways in which they were using the Appreciative Inquiry concepts and the resulting impact that these concepts had on trust and collaboration.

Unfortunately, the metrics data analyzed to determine if there were any increases in productivity were inconclusive. There were clear improvements in productivity, at the first two stages of enrollment; however, there was a decline in productivity at the point of contact with the financial aid department. This decline in productivity was not necessarily linked to the application of the Appreciative Inquiry framework.

Since the financial aid team declined to participate in the workshop, they were not exposed to the Appreciative Inquiry concepts and were not seeking opportunities to put the concepts into practice. This decline in productivity is most likely a direct result of a lack of leadership during this important stage of the enrollment process and not linked to the Appreciative Inquiry framework failing to impact productivity.

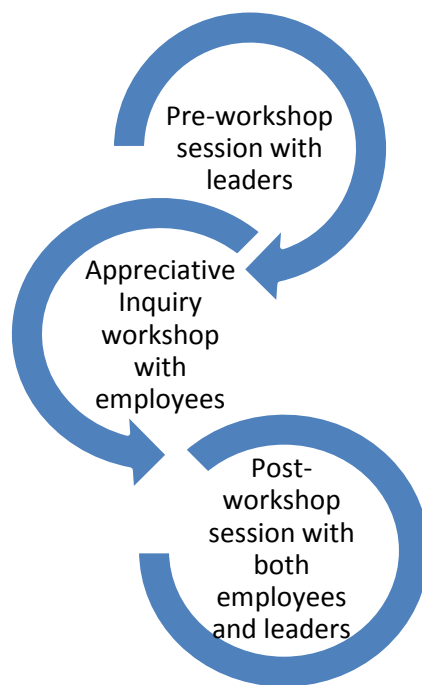
Even though the impact to productivity had inconclusive results, the main research question and four of the five sub-questions revealed in a positive connection between Appreciative Inquiry and the development of trust and collaboration between two student support departments. The data indicated a clear increase in trust between the employees who participated in the study, which ultimately led to improvements in collaboration between these two teams.

5.2 Emergent New Knowledge

One discovery that emerged during the study was the concept of leader participation during the workshop. Initially, the research was designed to uncover if the Appreciative Inquiry framework could be used as a grassroots method of empowering employees to take ownership of their actions and behaviors as it specifically relates to trust and collaboration between departments. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) describe this framework as a tool that inspires dialogue and one that is designed to ensure a collaborative approach to success. With employees recognizing the importance of their role in the overall purpose of the organization, they are empowered to contribute. As a result, I chose to design a workshop strictly for employees and the leaders were intentionally not asked to participate. However, based on the comments made by the participants during the interview and in journals, there was an indication that leader participation may have increased the positive effects of the workshop. Most participants indicated a desire for broader participation and leadership awareness of the Appreciative Inquiry concepts, with one participant specifically stating that the leader should have been present at the workshop.

The other participants suggested that there needed to be an alternative that would ensure leader awareness and support while still providing employees an opportunity to express ideas freely during the workshop without the fear of addressing sensitive topics in the presence of the leader. Based on this discovery during the data collection, I would recommend the following model (Diagram 5.1) when using the Appreciative Inquiry framework as a tool to increase trust between departments:

Diagram 5. 1 Model for Future Use



This model starts with leaders participating in a pre-workshop session, following with employees participating in the Appreciative Inquiry workshop, concluding with a post-workshop session consisting of both the leaders and employees.

Inviting leaders to participate in a pre-workshop session is designed to ensure that leaders are presented with the concepts of the Appreciative Inquiry framework and provide them with a solid understanding of the activities their employees will be engaged with during the workshop. Not only does this ensure leader awareness, but it also ensures leader support in permitting employees to engage in the workshop and discuss topics of trust between departments.

Employees then will still be able to participate in the workshop without leaders present, allowing open dialogue about the potentially sensitive topic of trust. Following the workshop, I would recommend a post-workshop session with both the leaders and employees present. Employees could take the lead during this session and share with leaders the dialogue that occurred at each of the four stages of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop. With employees leading the session, they maintain control over the level of detail shared with leaders while also providing the employees a level of ownership over the implementation of the ideas discussed during the workshop.

Considering the appropriate level of involvement with leaders can be difficult to maneuver. Special consideration should be given to the way in which leaders respond to the information presented. In fact, it is worth considering a session with leaders to address their role as leaders throughout this process. Ideally, leaders are exposed to the successful model of a transformational leader and are taught how transformational leaders support employee engagement. In fact, Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) discuss the role of the Appreciative Inquiry leader as one that must model expectations and show the participants how to view obstacles with a positive perspective, which aligns with the ideals of the transformational leader. A transformational leader recognizes the importance of developing relationships in order to inspire the desired behavior of their employees, nurturing an intrinsic motivation to do good work for the organization (McCaffery, 2010). These leaders must be willing to develop relationships with their employees and understand that genuine relationships begin with genuine communication. Transparent and honest communication, in a humble and vulnerable manner, builds genuine relationships, leading to the development of trust (Lencioni, 2012). Nienaber, Hofeditz and Romeike (2015) developed a theoretical framework of trust that links closely to the theory of transformational leadership. This theoretical framework of trust identifies vulnerability as the key behavior that is required in every trusting relationship (Nienaber, Hofeditz & Romeike, 2015). This vulnerability must not simply be in words only, but rather leaders must act in a way that is reflective of vulnerable behavior (Nienaber, Hofeditz & Romeike, 2015).

When leaders model the type of behavior that is expected of their employees, there is a sense of inclusion and trust is developed (Lencioni, 2012). In order to be effective, the Appreciative Inquiry leader must model open and honest communication, which will then foster an environment for transparency and trust required for the Appreciative Inquiry framework to be effective.

In order for the model for future use to be effective, leaders must not only be exposed to the concepts of Appreciative Inquiry prior to their employees engaging in a workshop, but they should also be exposed to the theory of transformational leadership so that they can make purposeful decisions about their interactions with their employees. While I did not intentionally study the effects of transformational leadership within the Appreciative Inquiry framework, it has become clear through this research that the transformational leadership qualities are ideal for the implementation of Appreciative Inquiry. If the leader models transformational leadership qualities through transparent communication with employees and vulnerably trusts their employees to discuss potentially sensitive topics without leadership being present, then the employees are likely to recognize those behaviors as supportive behaviors that will, in turn, result in transparent and honest communication between employee and leader. This then brings the Appreciative Inquiry workshop full circle with employees aware of their interactions with colleagues, and with the leaders aware of their interactions with employees, ensuring a positive environment that is designed for success. Future research should consider utilizing this model to determine if leader exposure to the Appreciative Inquiry concepts results in higher levels of support from top leadership, which then may increase the level of encouragement employees receive to interact in a way that is reflective of the Appreciative Inquiry concepts.

5.3 Strengths and Limitations

Below is a description of both strengths and limitations identified during this research endeavor.

Strengths

The Appreciative Inquiry framework has not been widely used as a tool to impact trust between departments. This novel approach to the use of the framework provided a successful contribution to the study of Appreciative Inquiry and potential future use for researchers.

The second strength with this study was the approach taken to analyze data. Using the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach permitted me to gain intimate knowledge of each participant's perceptions of the Appreciative Inquiry framework and the impact on perceived levels of trust between departments. The study was designed to ensure a review of each particular contribution of the participants and then identify the holistic themes of how the Appreciative Inquiry framework influenced trust between departments. This methodology ensured a theoretical generalizability allowing the reader to determine a potential relationship to their own professional setting (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Using a mixed method approach, I was also able to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data to ensure validity.

Limitations

There were two main areas of limitations in this research, including limitations with participants as well as limitations with the data collection process.

Limitations with Participants

This research sought to identify if increased levels of trust between student support departments would ultimately improve the enrollment process for prospective students. However, members of the enrollment department were excluded from the research. As I am the direct supervisor of the enrollment department it was determined that members of this team may feel coerced or pressured to participate in the research study; therefore, to avoid this ethical dilemma, this department was not asked to participate. Had the enrollment team

been exposed to the Appreciative Inquiry framework, the impact on trust may have had a broader reach, as they are the individuals responsible for the enrollment of new students and interact with all of the student support departments. With direct, purposeful interaction between the enrollment department and the student support departments, there may have been many more opportunities to engage with one another using the Appreciative Inquiry concepts, which may have resulted in a more positive impact to productivity. As stated earlier, the financial aid department did not participate; however, with the enrollment department's participation there would have been opportunities to practice methods to improve trust with the individuals working in the financial aid department, which may have ended with a different impact on productivity. Future research should consider including all interconnecting departments that are dependent upon one another in this type of research study.

The second limitation with participants is the limited size of the study. This research took place at a small Art and Design institution that employs just over 100 full-time individuals. Due to the intimate size of the institution, there is not a lot of redundancy within departments and the absence of one individual may mean that an entire department is without coverage. While I did originally request the participation of 14 individuals at the institution, only five of the individuals asked were able to commit the time necessary to participate in the study. This drastically reduced the impact across the student support services teams. Future research should consider the timing of the workshop to occur during the summer months when students are not on campus and availability to participate may have increased. I would also recommend extending an invite to participate beyond just two student support teams. Future research should consider engaging additional departments to determine the broader impact of the Appreciative Inquiry framework on building team collaboration and trust throughout the institution. In addition, future research may consider an action research study, using several enrollment cycles to provide data for a longitudinal study. In addition, leaders of the departments were not asked to participate in the study and as a result were unable to take the lead in modeling the Appreciative Inquiry framework for their employees.

With leader participation, the key components of this framework may have been further embedded into the daily interactions between teams. Future research may consider the inclusion of leaders and the use of the 'Model for Future Use' as described above.

Limitations with Data Collection

Unfortunately, it proved difficult to obtain journals from the participants. Doing my best not to overburden the participants, I chose to provide only one journal prompt at a time. Even with this very purposeful approach, it was extremely difficult to convince the participants to complete the journals. When asked why, the participants stated that it was a time issue. They had the desire to complete the journals and continue to support the research study; however, it was a requirement that consistently ended up at the bottom of the task list. Future research might consider alternative methods for journaling such as video or audio recordings on smart phones, as well as consider including dedicated time for the participants to complete the journals. This might be as simple as blocking 30 minutes of their time on their calendars, asking them to come together as a group in a comfortable space, and then allowing them an opportunity to reflect and journal individually. The individual interviews were approached in this manner and all participants were successfully able to commit to the time on the calendar and engage with the interview. This approach may ensure a dedicated block of time necessary to complete the journals and provide the structure required for reflection (Otieno, 2009).

A second limitation with the data collection was around the use of the term 'collaboration'. In both the journals and individual interviews, the participants were asked to discuss how they were collaborating with other departments. In all cases, the experiences described by the participants were positive. This has caused me to question the inferred meaning of collaboration. Does collaboration assume a positive experience? If the question had been rephrased to 'moments of interaction', it may have elicited a wider variety of responses, rather than only moments of positivity. Future research may consider the implied meaning behind the word collaboration and consider adjusting the wording to ensure there is no assumption of positivity that may have influenced the findings.

The third limitation with the data collection was with the record sheets. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, I was unable to participate in meetings to record positive and negative interactions prior to the Appreciative Inquiry workshop. By attending meetings prior to the workshop, I would have been able to measure a baseline of positive or negative interaction that was occurring prior to the exposure of the Appreciative Inquiry concepts. Since I was only able to participate in meetings after the workshop, I was unable to determine if there had been an improvement in interactions. Rather, I was only able to determine that the participants were indeed interacting positively indicating a positive impact to team collaborations. Future research should consider establishing a baseline of interactions prior to the workshop to evaluate any improvements in interaction.

The fourth limitation to the data collection was the timing of the workshop. If the workshop had occurred during the 'off season' for the student support departments, it may have encouraged more participation from individuals. Originally, the workshop was scheduled to occur just before the holiday season, historically a less busy time for the teams. Unfortunately, due to illness, I had to postpone the workshop to a date after the holidays. I considered conducting the workshop on a weekend, to ensure there were no conflicts with work commitments. However, I did receive institutional approval for the workshop to take place during the workweek and I was concerned that individuals would not agree to participate if they were asked to engage in a full day workshop during their personal time. Therefore, it was imperative that the workshop take place on a day that did not interfere with the student experience during the workweek. While I was successfully able to identify the day, the workshop occurred just one week prior to our spring orientation for new student arrival. This is still a busy time for the departments and may have influenced the decision of some individuals to decline participation. Future research should consider timing the workshop during a season in the cycle that is not stressful for the participants, which may then result in a larger number of individuals able to commit the time necessary to participate.

5.4 Implications for Practice

Appreciative inquiry has been utilized in many organizations for many purposes. There is limited research on the use of this tool to develop trust and build team cohesion. This research has contributed to the body of knowledge regarding Appreciative Inquiry and the development of trust. In most cases, the framework has been used to realign an organization or department's mission and purpose and has not been used specifically for the purpose of building trust. My research focused on the use of the framework as a tool to build trust between departments, improving overall collaboration with the hope to affect productivity. Based on the findings, there are three areas that have implications for practice including, trust and collaboration throughout the campus, operational efficiencies, and institutional strategies, as well as relationship development between leaders and employees

Campus Wide Trust and Collaboration

Trust and collaboration both emerged as important themes in the data. The participants indicated that one of the immediate effects of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop was the impact made on trust and, as a result, the improvements in collaboration with individuals from other departments. This impact on trust was because the participants were able to engage in honest conversations during the workshop that led to the discovery of a common purpose, the student. With the student at the center of everyone's purpose, there was a greater inclination to trust that an individual would do what was necessary for a mutually positive result. While the data in this research revealed collaboration to be a by-product of trust, it was due to the participants' vulnerable willingness to trust other individuals at the institution, which naturally led to collaboration with others. In fact, two of the participants shared experiences of unexpected positive interactions with other departments due to their willingness to trust others.

Recognizing the impact that this framework has on trust could make a significant impact on collaboration with others throughout an organization. Organizations must recognize that building trust is vital to improving successful collaborations throughout the institution.

This research limited the study to two student service departments; however, there is potential for a larger impact to be campus-wide. With the application of the Appreciative Inquiry framework as a tool to improve trust across the entire campus, there is a greater probability of a campus-wide commitment to the concepts discovered during the workshop as well as the application of those concepts throughout campus. With a broader commitment from the entire campus to establish practices to trust individuals in different departments, there will grow an organic willingness to collaborate.

Operational Efficiencies/Institutional Strategies

With collaboration come operational efficiencies (Gardiner, 2006; McCaffery, 2010; Tracy, 2010; Calabrese, Cohen, & Miller, 2013; Harmon, 2013). While the data in this research project did not directly point to improvements in productivity, there was evidence that improvements in collaboration have the potential to influence overall improvements in operational efficiencies. For example, one concept that emerged from the workshop was the desire to have less gossiping and negativity in the workplace. With less negativity and gossip, there is the potential to find improvements in productivity. Gouveia, Van Vuuren and Crafford (2005) explicitly state that one of the effects of workplace gossip is a lack of trust, leading to a lack of control, ultimately affecting productivity and the bottom-line of an organization. The Appreciative Inquiry workshop revealed the negative effects of these actions and drove the participants to desire positive collaborations with other departments with the ultimate goal of improving productivity. This purposeful collaboration was found in the data collected as the participants provided examples of ways in which they sought to work with individuals in other departments that they would have avoided in the past. Rather than avoiding interaction with a 'difficult department', the participants sought out those departments in the hopes of working together for a common goal, with the potential to affect productivity. It is possible that the exposure to Appreciative Inquiry assisted in the development of their confidence to work collaboratively.

Institutions succeed when they have achieved operational efficiencies that maximize productivity (Cameron, Mora, Leutscher and Calarco, 2011; Karakas, 2009; Lencioni, 2012). My research has revealed that trust and collaboration lead to the potential for increased productivity. When individuals have a willingness to discuss ideas with one another and to consider best practices to achieve the desired outcome, there is a much greater likelihood that the best practices will have a positive impact on the overall efficiencies of an organization ultimately leading to maximized productivity. Therefore, institutions should strategize on methods to improve trust and collaboration for all employees. This research found the Appreciative Inquiry framework to impact perceptions of trust, leading to an impact on collaboration, culminating with an impact on productivity. While the direct impact to productivity may be a by-product of increases in trust, it is still worth the investment of institutions to strategize on ways to improve the interactions between employees, as it is highly likely that the increased perception of trust will improve organizational efficiencies and productivity.

Leader – Employee Relationships

The third implication to practice has to do with the relationship between leaders and employees. The research conducted for this study did not include leadership participation in the Appreciative Inquiry workshop. However, the data collected revealed a desire to have broader participation in the workshop, including exposure of the Appreciative Inquiry concepts to functional leaders within the institution. This request reveals recognition that there was a positive influence between the participants and implies a desire to extend the potential impact of trust from beyond just employees and into the relationship between leaders and employees.

Though the extent to which leaders should be included in the workshop is debatable, it is clear that some exposure to the concepts will ensure leaders have an opportunity to support and model the expected actions discovered during the workshop. In addition, consideration should be given to the potential for improvements in trust between the leader and the employee.

If this workshop resulted in a benefit between employees, then it is likely that the same benefit could be extended between leader and employee. Organizations that are seeking ways to impact trust between leaders and employees may want to consider the Appreciative Inquiry framework as an effective tool.

Personal Impact on my Professional Practice

In addition to the implications the Appreciative Inquiry framework could have on the relationship between leader and employee; there has been a significant impact personally on my role as a leader within my own professional practice. Researching the effects of Appreciative Inquiry provided insight into effective and non-effective practices that influence the development of trust between both leaders and employees as well as between departments. Through a reflective lens, I have considered the role of Appreciative Inquiry in how I develop individuals and teams. In fact, even though the enrollment team was unable to participate in the research, I have still found opportunities to foster trust, both between my employees and myself as well as between the enrollment team and other departments. I have encouraged open conversations with the team, building trust through honest dialogue, as is reflective of a transformational leader (McCaffery, 2010; Lencioni, 2012). I have also helped employees recognize that there is a common thread that binds employees of the university, the student. With the understanding that the student at the center of all activity, the enrollment team has not only recognized the importance of improving collaborations with departments that have historically been difficult, but it also has toppled the wall of misunderstandings. No longer is there an immediate assumption of negativity or distrust between the enrollment team and other departments, now there is a willingness to take a step back and reassess the situation, working with others to establish better communications to ensure future interactions remain positive. This may be the result and advantage of working in such a small institution. Changes in behavior by a few individuals have the potential to be viewed and then adopted by others quickly, ensuring a trickle-down effect that can result in campus-wide improvements.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

In addition, to the recommendations outlined in the limitations section, the discovery of leader(s) participation in the workshop is something that should be considered for future research. While one individual was supportive of the idea, the other participants found the workshop to be free from judgment without leaders present. However, the data collected indicated the desire for leaders to participate, if not directly in the workshop, at least with exposure to the Appreciative Inquiry framework. With this exposure, leaders could offer support to the participants by continuing to encourage behaviors that make a positive impact on trust and collaboration between departments (Lencioni, 2012). As stated earlier, this framework can and has been used as a tool for managers to make a positive impact in the workplace (Camargo-Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013; McCaffery, 2010; Johnson, 2010; Tracy, 2010). However, there was no indication in my literature review to suggest that the *only* effective way to implement these concepts is through the direct participation of leaders, which is why this research was designed to investigate the use of this framework as a grassroots method for employees to take ownership of their interactions with colleagues without leader participation.

I would recommend further research to uncover the implications of leader involvement in Appreciative Inquiry workshops with employees present, specifically as it pertains to the impact on trust. The model designed to accommodate leader participation (Diagram 4.6) could potentially investigate if leader exposure to the Appreciative Inquiry concepts would broaden the impact on trust and collaboration ultimately influencing the productivity of an organization. In addition, it may be useful to ask leaders to reflect on their preferred leadership style before exposure to the Appreciative Inquiry concepts. If leaders do not claim to prefer the traits of transformational leadership then a pre-workshop session educating leaders on the benefits of transformational leadership in relation to Appreciative Inquiry may be useful. This may be best completed through a longitudinal study that includes baseline data collection prior to the Appreciative Inquiry workshop with data continued to be collected following the workshop throughout a full year cycle of activity.

Additionally, I would recommend the use of photo-elicitation as a way to conclude the Appreciative Inquiry workshops. This exercise is not technically a part of the workshop, but I chose to add it as a way to conclude the day with celebration. The result was encouraging as the participants chose positive images to express their thoughts and feelings about the workshop and their expectations of the future. Based on the images that were chosen and the emotions expressed during this exercise, it was clear that the participants felt a sense of empowerment and hope, linking these thoughts directly to the work they accomplished, and the enlightenment received, during the workshop.

5.6 Personal Growth on becoming a Practitioner Researcher

This four-year journey toward becoming a practitioner researcher was one that was wrought with both joy and pain. During the coursework, there were moments of intense satisfaction as I was able to feel an incredible sense of accomplishment with the completion of each module. However, I do believe that the uphill portion of this journey began after the courses were completed and I started down the unknown path of conducting research and writing.

When reflecting on the areas that went well with this research endeavor, I am most often struck by the purpose and direction I chose for my research. Exposure to the Appreciative Inquiry framework was the defining moment for my research direction. I truly desired to conduct research that would make a positive impact on my current workplace and attempt to uncover ways in which we as a university could better engage with one another. The Appreciative Inquiry framework provided that tool to uncover if indeed a strengths-based approach to challenges would result in improvements in trust between departments. After choosing to investigate this topic, I was then exposed to a myriad of researchers who sought ways to make a positive improvement in the workplace. While not all of the research I encountered was directly applicable to my own research, this exposure did provide additional insight into ways in which I could better interact with and lead my own team.

One area that was a personal challenge for me as a researcher, conducting research at my place of employment, was related to the insight I obtained about the interactions between teams. During the workshop, interviews, and journals, the participants' revealed information about the inner workings of their department that were not always positive. It was difficult for me to bracket that information and remember that this insight was provided to me as my role of a researcher, and not as my role as a leader in this organization.

I found that keeping a personal journal was an excellent way for me to reflect on my role as an insider practitioner and keep a distance from the data collected. This process of reflection allowed me to identify behaviors that I could personally adjust in my professional practices, without compromising the integrity of the research. Similar to the suggestions by Argyris (2002a) I embraced a stance of self-reflection in order to change my personal behavior. I was also able to initiate Argyris' (2002a) concept of double loop learning and used the information gained during this research to truly change my behaviors without defensiveness and with humility. While I did not conduct an action research project, I was able to take time during this research to reflect on actions that were effective and those that were not, and then make immediate adjustments to my behavior in the hopes of creating a more fruitful professional experience (Coghlan & Brannick, 2013).

In particular, the concept of building trust between employees was an emerging theme that resonated with me as a practitioner researcher. I have been able to consider ways in which my own interactions with my employees should be founded on honest and transparent communications. I have sought out opportunities to model for my team ways in which healthy interaction takes place between individuals, during moments of agreement as well as disagreement. By vulnerably interacting with my team and modeling for them behavior that is positive, I have seen a shift in perspectives that is driving the team toward collaborative behaviors. For example, I have discussed previously the difficult interactions with the financial aid team.

There is now a new leader in place for this team and this individual has been given the challenge of correcting previously negative behaviors and ensuring a positive student experience. In an effort to support this new leader, I have gone out of my way to bring the teams together to openly discuss ways in which we as teams should interact with honest and transparent communications. Because I have taken the time to show my team how to interact with grace and positivity, there has been a shift in perspective from anticipating the worse, to expecting the best.

5.7 Conclusion

The application of the Appreciative Inquiry framework as a tool to impact trust between employees and departments appeared to be successful in this research study. Through the detailed examination of the experiences documented by the participants, it is clear that the framework has not only made a positive impact on trust between the participants, but it also has the potential to extend into improvements in productivity. All qualitative data collected highlighted the importance of collaborating between teams through positivity with a strengths-based perspective. The quantitative data collected were intended to support the qualitative assessment and clearly did so with the record sheets as the participants were engaging positively with members of other departments. Unfortunately, the results of the productivity metric data did not provide conclusive evidence of the Appreciative Inquiry concepts influencing productivity, although this was most likely a result of the lack of leadership in place for the financial aid department at this time and not caused by the Appreciative Inquiry research. Regardless, based on the wide breadth of data collected and the emergent themes identified, there does appear to be a positive connection for these participants between Appreciative Inquiry and the impact on trust and collaboration.

Organizations that are struggling to nurture a culture of trust should consider conducting an Appreciative Inquiry workshop for a broad audience in order to uncover misperceptions that are leading to mistrust and to foster the dialogue necessary to bridge departments with a willingness to trust one another. With a willingness to trust, employees will seek out opportunities to collaborate, contributing to the productivity of the organization.

In addition, leaders who are struggling to build trust with their employees should also consider this tool and the theory of transformational leadership to make improvements in the relationship between employee and leader. While my research did not directly evaluate the effectiveness of this tool for that purpose, the data collected did point to a potentially positive impact on trust between leaders and employees. I would recommend using the model for future use (Diagram 4.6) to include leaders in the discussion and implementation of the Appreciative Inquiry concepts discovered during the workshop.

Even though there was a small sample size and the research was limited to two student support departments, I would not hesitate to recommend additional use of this framework as a tool to affect trust. Based on the findings from this research there is a potential for the Appreciative Inquiry concepts to not only influence the higher education environment but also impact any organization struggling to create a workplace environment rooted in trust and collaboration.

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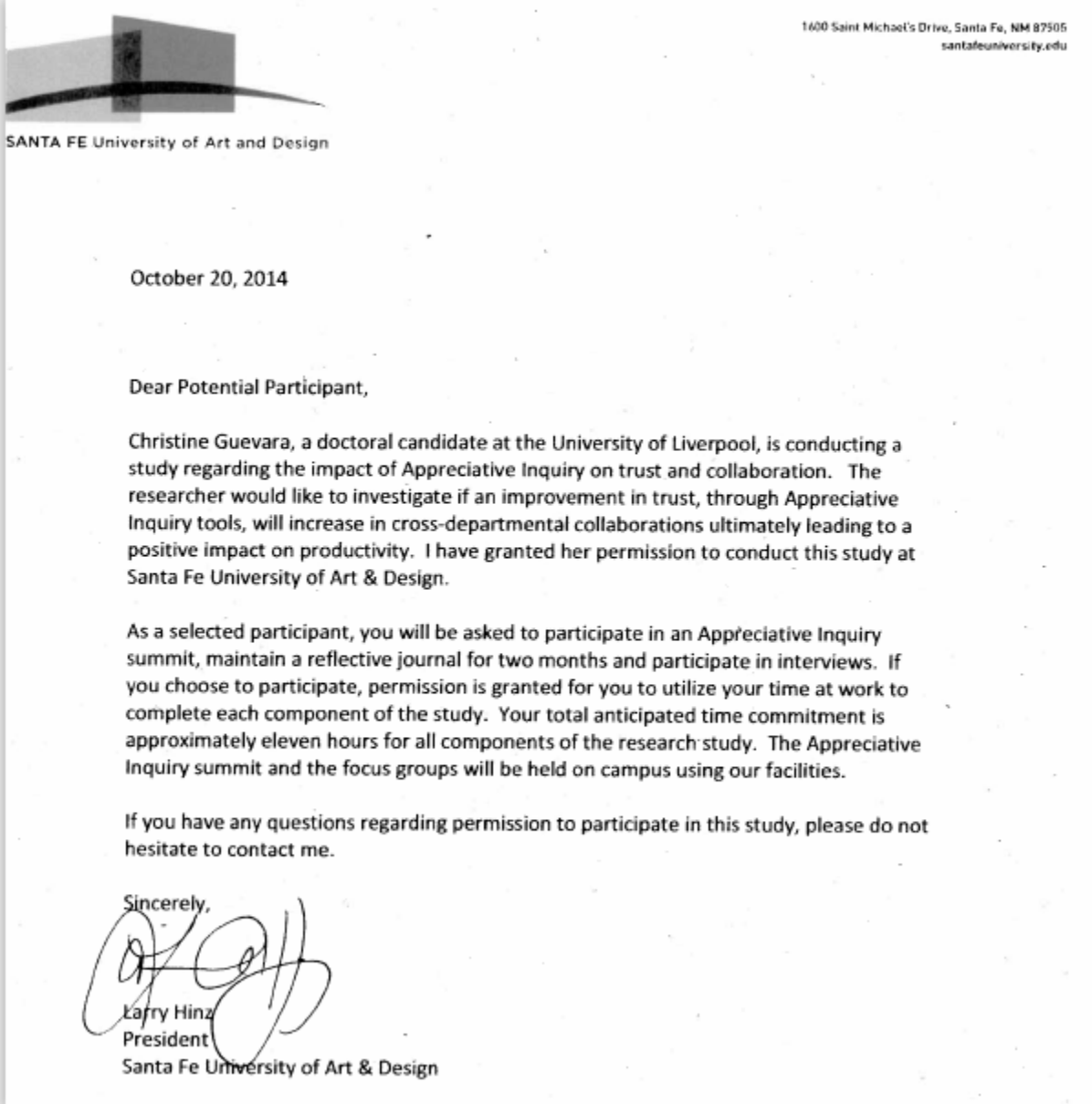
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Appendix 3.1 Written Authorization from President



Appendix 3.2 Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Title of Study

The impact of Appreciative Inquiry on Trust and Collaboration: A practitioner research study

Version Number and Date

Version 1 / 8-10-14

Invitation

This invitation is for participation in a research study. Before you decide to participate, it is important that you understand why this research is being conducted and what will be involved in the process. Please take the time to read this information sheet thoroughly. If there is anything that you would like clarified, or if you have additional questions, please feel free to contact me. I would also encourage you to discuss this with your friends and colleagues. I must stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to. All participants should be aware that the role of the researcher is separate from the researcher's professional role. This project will not interfere with the professional expectations of participants or the professional relationship with the researcher.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the use of an Appreciative Inquiry framework has any effect(s) on the development of trust and collaboration. Appreciative Inquiry is a research approach used to identify the positive strengths of an organization or department. This approach empowers individuals to recognize collective strengths and then use those strengths to inform practice, encouraging individuals to view challenges through a strengths perspective, inspiring dialog and a collaborative approach to success. The researcher would like to investigate if an improvement in trust will increase in cross-departmental collaborations ultimately leading to a positive impact on productivity.

Why have I been chosen to take part?

All members of the Student Operations and Student Life teams have been chosen to participate in this study. As key departments responsible for contributing to the enrollment of students, all 14 members of both teams have been asked to participate.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in the research study is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw at any time without explanation and without it affecting their relationship with the researcher.

What will happen if I take part?

The researcher, Christine Guevara, will ask participants to contribute to, or participate in, the following:

Appreciative Inquiry Summit

All individuals who volunteer to participate in this research will be required to attend a two-day summit to collaboratively discover strengths, dream about the future, design the ideal state, and realize the positive destiny of the teams (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). This summit will take place at the beginning of the new recruiting cycle in order for the effect of the summit to infuse a fresh cycle of collaboration between the teams. This summit will take place during regular working hours.

Interviews

The researcher will conduct individual interviews with all participants as a follow up to the summit. The interviews will be designed to further probe into the culture of trust and teamwork. Each participant will be asked to complete one initial interview for the duration of approximately one hour, with a possible request for a follow-up interview near the end of the research. The interviews will take place during the months of October and November, with follow-up interviews occurring in February. With your permission, these interviews will include a digital audio recording which will facilitate transcription of the interview. The transcription will be anonymized by using a pseudonym.

Reflective Journals

The participants will be asked to contribute to the research through a reflective journal once every two weeks during a two-month period, resulting in four journal submissions. Participants will be asked to reflect on their personal interactions between team members within and outside of their immediate team. Participants will receive written instructions to guide their efforts and journal entries will be limited to one page per entry. Individuals will be asked to document their use of a positive lens when dealing with a concern(s) as well as document their contribution to building trust between teams. Anticipated time required for journals should be no more than 15 minutes every two weeks. The researcher will also keep her own reflective journal.

Record Sheets

The researcher will utilize a record sheet to document a quantitative view of interaction between teams during collaborative meetings that occur after the summit. This log will be structured to ensure ease of use to quickly track when individuals are contributing to positive team interactions. This will not require any additional work from the participants; it is simply an observation log, tracked by the researcher at various collaborative meetings between teams after the summit. These meetings are already part of normal work engagement and are already scheduled. The researcher will not ask participants to meet for additional collaborative meetings in addition to the summit. Only those individuals who volunteer to participate will have their contributions annotated during interactive meetings.

Productivity Metrics

Improvements in productivity will be analyzed using historical enrollment metrics. Data will be reviewed from prior cycles to determine if there is a change in productivity at each of the enrollment conversion gates. These data will not reviewed be at an individual/participant level; rather the data reviewed will be a holistic look at overall enrollment growth from one year to the next. This will not require any additional work from the participants.

Expenses and/or payments

Participants will not incur any expense as a result of this research and will not receive payment for their time.

Are there any risks in take part?

Participation in the research will require honest dialog, however, the researcher does not expect any participant to be harmed or incur any risk. The summit will take place within the working day at the workplace and all professional working norms will be expected. This will be emphasized at the start of each session. In addition, if at any time the participant experiences discomfort or disadvantage due to this research, the participant should inform the researcher immediately. The researcher will attempt to address the participants concerns and the participant may decide to discontinue participation without any adverse effect.

Are there any benefits in taking part?

This research is designed as a professional development opportunity for all participants. Should individuals participate in this research, the researcher anticipates individuals gaining useful skills to apply throughout their professional careers.

What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, you may contact any one of the following:

- Christine Guevara at 505-473-6652
- Morag Gray by email to morag.gray@online.liverpool.ac.uk
- Research Governance Officer at liverpooethics@ohecampus.com. When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the study, the researcher involved, and the details of the compliant you wish to make.

Will my participation be kept confidential?

Participation in this research will remain confidential. Even though participants will collaborate during the Appreciative Inquiry summit, their contributions will remain anonymous in the final publication. In addition, ground rules will be established to ensure positive and respectful engagement throughout the summit and participants will be asked to keep all items discussed during the summit confidential (what happens at the summit, stays at the summit). The contributions will remain anonymous and each participant will be given a pseudonym for the purposes of the research. When necessary, identifiable features will be altered to assure the anonymity of the participant. In addition, the researcher will send data and information attributable to specific participants and ask them to review and approve the content prior to publication. Data collected will be stored on a secure, password protected computer, with a back-up located on a secure external hard drive. The data will be used for this project and potentially future projects. Data will be kept secure for five years after the project completion, at which time it will be destroyed.

What will happen to the results of the study?

Data will be used in the thesis submitted by the researcher for the completion of an Educational Doctorate in Higher Education. The final thesis will be made available to participants, the President of the university, the researcher's Thesis Supervisor, Morag Gray and University of Liverpool appointed examiners. The researcher will also seek to publish in peer-reviewed journals.

What will happen if I want to stop taking part?

Participants can withdraw at any time without explanation and without it affecting their relationship with the researcher. Results obtain up to this point will only be used with the approval of the participant.

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

Christine Guevara

(505)473-6652 – Office

(505)819-9295 – Cell

Christine.guevara@online.liverpool.ac.uk

Appendix 3.3 Participant Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: The impact of Appreciative Inquiry on Trust and Collaboration: A practitioner research study

Researcher: Christine Guevara

**Please
initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated 8-10-2014 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.
3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.
4. The information you have submitted will be published as a report; please indicate whether you would like to receive a copy.
5. I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me in any publications.
6. I understand and agree that my participation will be audio recorded and I am aware of and consent to your use of these recordings to transcribe the interview.
7. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.
8. I understand and agree that once I submit my data it will become anonymised and I will therefore no longer be able to withdraw my data.
9. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Participant Name	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Person taking consent	Date	Signature

Christine Guevara

Researcher

Date

Signature

Principal Investigator:

Christine Guevara

1600 Saint Michael's Drive, Santa Fe, NM 87505

505-473-6652

Christine.guevara@online.liverpool.ac.uk

Appendix 3.4 VPREC Approval

Dear Christine

I am pleased to inform you that the EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC) has approved your application for ethical approval for your study. Details and conditions of the approval can be found below.

Sub-Committee: EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC)
Review type: Expedited
PI:
School: Lifelong Learning
Title:
First Reviewer: Dr. Peter Kahn
Second Reviewer: Dr. Michael Watts
Other members of the Committee: Dr. Baaska Anderson; Dr. Lucilla Crosta
Date of Approval: 2nd October 2014

The application was APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

1	Mandatory	M: All serious adverse events must be reported to the VPREC within 24 hours of their occurrence, via the EdD Thesis Primary Supervisor.
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This approval applies for the duration of the research. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study as specified in the application form, the Sub-Committee should be notified. If it is proposed to make an amendment to the research, you should notify the Sub-Committee by following the Notice of Amendment procedure outlined at <http://www.liv.ac.uk/media/livacuk/researchethics/notice%20of%20amendment.doc>.

Where your research includes elements that are not conducted in the UK, approval to proceed is further conditional upon a thorough risk assessment of the site and local permission to carry out the research, including, where such a body exists, local research ethics committee approval. No documentation of local permission is required (a) if the researcher will simply be asking organizations to distribute research invitations on the researcher's behalf, or (b) if the researcher is using only public means to identify/contact participants. When medical, educational, or business records are analysed or used to identify potential research participants, the site needs to explicitly approve access to data for research purposes (even if the researcher normally has access to that data to perform his or her job).

Please note that the approval to proceed depends also on research proposal approval.

Kind regards, Morag Gray

on behalf of Dr. Peter Kahn Chair, EdD. VPREC

Appendix 3.5 Appreciative Inquiry Workshop

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY SUMMIT

February 8, 2018

Researcher: Christine Gannon

The Impact of Appreciative Inquiry on Trust and Collaboration: A practitioner research study

1

AGENDA

- 8:30 – 9:00 Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry
- 9:00 – 10:30 Discovery Phase Part 1
- 10:30 – 11:15 Break
- 11:15 – 12:00 Discovery Phase Part 2
- 12:00 Working lunch
- 12:30 – 2:00 Dream Phase
- 2:00 – 2:45 Break
- 2:15 – 3:30 Design Phase
- 3:30 – 4:30 Destiny Phase
- 4:30 – 5:00 Wrap-Up Celebration

February 8, 2018

Agenda

3

INTRODUCTION TO APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY (AI)

Ap-pre'ci-ate (verb)

- Valuing: the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us: affirming past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life to living systems.
- To increase value, e.g., the economy has appreciated in value

Synonyms: Valuing, Prizing, Esteeming, Honoring

In-quire (verb)

- The act of exploration and discovery
- To ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities.

Synonyms: Discovery, Search, Systematic Exploration, Study

AI seeks to discover the 'positive change core' of an organization and uses this core as fuel for all future opportunity.

February 8, 2018

8:30 – 9:00

3

QUOTES – AI IN PRACTICE

*"Watch your words: they become your thoughts.
Watch your thoughts: they become your actions.
Watch your actions: they become your habits.
Watch your habits: they become your destiny"*
– Frank Outlaw

"No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it. We must learn to see the world anew"
– Albert Einstein

"When you change how you see the world, your whole world changes"
– Alan Watts

"The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results"
– Rita Mae Brown

February 8, 2018

8:30 – 9:00

4

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF AI

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- Asks unconditional positive questions
- Avoids being problem-centered
- Asks what's possible rather than what's wrong
- Asks about the positives, without highlighting the negatives (negatives can easily be inferred)
- Is the opposite of problem solving

February 8, 2018

8:30 – 9:00

5

4-D CYCLE OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

February 8, 2018

8:30-9:00

6

SUMMIT GROUND RULES: PERSPECTIVE

- All ideas are valid
- Keep negativity out
- Find inner core of positivity
- Listen to one another
- Agree to disagree – and move on
- ACTION – think about how these ideas can be put into action
- Everything is captured: flip charts/notes/images/digital recorder
- Observe the schedule



February 8, 2018 9:30 - 9:00 7

DISCOVERY PHASE: PART I

Discovery

Discovering the best of what has been and what is – reveal the root cause of previous success

February 8, 2018 9:00 - 12:00 8

OVERVIEW OF APPRECIATIVE INTERVIEWS

Discovery

- Purpose of AI interviews – reveal what gives life when functioning at our best.
- Partner from someone outside of immediate team
- Use Interview Guide to direct story telling – Exercise One
- Spirit of Inquiry – listen and learn
- Focus on Stories – safe space to share

February 8, 2018 9:00 - 10:00 9

BREAK

10:30 – 11:15

Wrap up Interviews and be prepared to discuss at 11:15

February 8, 2018 10:00 - 10:15 10

GROUP SHARE

Discovery



Every one will introduce the person they interviewed and share that person's story

What did we Discover?

- What did you find most surprising about the interviews?
- What did you hear as the team/individual's greatest strengths?
- What was the most inspiring and compelling story told – and why?

Identify Key Themes

February 8, 2018 11:15 - 12:00 11

MAP THE POSITIVE CORE

- Key themes emerged from interviews
- Illustrate these themes

GOAL: Design one creative metaphor that depicts the positive key themes that emerged from the interviews

- Small Group Brainstorm (5-10 min)
- Whole Group Consensus (5-10 min)
- Whole Group Create (until noon)
- Examples

Discovery

February 8, 2018 12:00 - 1:00 12

POSITIVE CORE EXAMPLES

February 6, 2016 13

POSITIVE CORE EXAMPLES

February 6, 2016 14

LUNCH

12:00

- Lunch provided
- Working lunch

February 6, 2016 15

DREAM PHASE: PART II

Dream

What is our world calling us to be?

February 6, 2016 16

ENVISION THE FUTURE

- Self Reflection (Exercise Two)
 - What are your greatest hopes, dreams and wishes for the team?
 - Imagine BIG! Think Bold! Think Creatively!
 - What's the dream team look like?
 - Identify tangible and specific qualities based on what was discovered in first phase

Dream

February 6, 2016 17

ENVISION THE FUTURE

Dream

- Open Discussion
 - Identify common dream team themes
- Team Depiction
 - Add to the Positive Core

February 6, 2016 18

BREAK

2:00 – 2:45

Wrap up Dream Team and be prepared to Design at 2:45

February 8, 2018 2:00 – 2:45 19

DESIGN PHASE: PART III

Design

What should be the ideal?
What's the mission of the Dream Team?

February 8, 2018 2:45 – 3:30 20

DESIGN PHASE: PART III

Create a concrete purpose statement for both internal and external audience

Bring the dreams to life that can be enacted on a daily basis.

Conscious teams have principles that foster high performance, collaboration and trust

- **Small Group Brainstorm – Exercise Three**
 - Why do we exist and what do we intend to accomplish
 - Simple and clear
 - Review Positive Core Map for guidance
- **Whole Group Create**
 - Why do we exist and what do we intend to accomplish
 - What is our concrete purpose statement
 - Add to the Positive Core map



Design

February 8, 2018 2:45 – 3:30 21


DESTINY PHASE: PART IV

Destiny

What actions define our future?
How do we empower/learn/adjust/improvise?

February 8, 2018 3:30 – 4:30 22

DESTINY PHASE: PART IV



Destiny

- How will each member take what they have learned and use it to contribute to the future success of the team?
- **Exercise Four**
 - **Individual reflection**
 - What will I do more of
 - What will I do less of
 - What will I continue to do
 - **Team reflection**
 - What should the team do more of
 - What should the team do less of
 - What should the team continue to do
- **Create master list of reflection points**
 - Use this information as a guide to remind yourself to engage in positive action

February 8, 2018 3:30 – 4:30 23

CELEBRATION WRAP-UP

Celebrate

February 8, 2018 4:30-5:00 24

CELEBRATION

- Review what was accomplished as a team
- Pick image that best describes thoughts/feelings about the process – share
- What's your future positive destiny?



Celebrate

February 6, 2016

4:30 - 5:00

25

NEXT STEPS

Individual/Group Discussions

- Team Interviews
- Early Spring – how has AI impacted your interactions?

Reflective Journals

- Once every two weeks for two month period – four journals total (January and February)
- Researcher to provide journal guide/prompts

February 6, 2016

4:30 - 5:00

26

Appendix 3.6 Sample Positive Core Maps



Appendix 3.7 Individual Interview Guide

Interview Guide for Individual Interviews

Interviews scheduled to take place on February 26 and 27

- 1) What are your thoughts on the Appreciative Inquiry concepts that were discussed at the workshop?
- 2) What elements of Appreciative Inquiry resonated with you most and why?
- 3) Have you incorporated any of these concepts into your interactions with members of your immediate team?
 - a. If yes, please give an example.
 - b. If no, why not?
- 4) Have any of the Appreciative Inquiry concepts affected your approach to collaboration with members of the university from other teams?
 - a. If yes, please give an example.
 - b. If no, why not?
- 5) Have you noticed any change in the way in which you approach a new project or task? Please give an example.
- 6) Have you noticed any change in trust with members of your immediate team? Please give an example.
 - a. With members outside of your team? Please give an example.
- 7) Did the Appreciative Inquiry framework change your perception of the university and the future of the organization?
 - a. If yes, please give an example.
 - b. If no, why do you think that is?
- 8) In respect to the AI workshop, what had the greatest impact on you personally? Professionally? Explore examples.
- 9) Again in respect of the AI workshop, were there any aspects that you found unhelpful? If yes, please tell me a bit more about them.
- 10) Is there anything you thought I would ask, that I haven't?
- 11) Closing question – is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Appendix 4.1 Partner dialogue guide

Discovery Phase / Exercise One

Summit: January 9, 2015

Appreciative Inquiry Partner Dialogue Guide

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Tell me about your beginnings with this team.

- What were your initial hopes, dreams and excitements as you first contemplated joining this group?

Now, describe a peak experience or high point in your experience with this team, a time when you felt most alive, most engaged, and proud of yourself, your co-workers and the work you were doing.

- What were all the conditions and circumstances that contributed to that experience (e.g., you, other people, the task, the leadership, the process)
- How did your best qualities bring out the best in others and how did they inspire you to be the best you could possibly be?

Reflecting on this peak experience and other experiences of its kind...

- What do you most value about you and the unique skills, gifts, and talents that you bring to this team and the work that you do?
- What do you value most about this team and its larger mission in the organization – and in the world?

Topic Questions – Trust

Think about all the teams you have been on. Tell me about one that you would say is/was characterized by an environment of trust. Describe the team and what it did/does.

- How was an environment of trust established?
- How did you know an environment of trust was present?

What were the benefits of the environment of trust...

- to team members?
- to the work they were doing?
- to their organization?

What can we learn from this team that might help our current team build a stronger environment of trust?

Appendix 4.2 Post-Workshop Evaluation

Thank you for your participation in the Appreciative Inquiry Workshop. Your contributions to the conversation were valued and appreciated. Please take 5-10 minutes to complete this post-summit evaluation.

- 1) The Appreciative Inquiry workshop provided concrete ways to improve collaboration with my colleagues.
- 2) I have an increased level of trust with my colleagues as a direct result of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop.
- 3) I left the workshop with a renewed outlook on what is possible at this institution and a reenergized hope for the future.
- 4) I believe that using a framework of positivity can increase trust between individuals.
- 5) Trust is directly linked with cross-departmental collaboration.
- 6) An environment of trust increases productivity.
- 7) This institution fosters trust between individuals and departments.
- 8) Trust between teammates improves the overall student experience.
- 9) Trust is not linked to productivity.
- 10) Decisions are made within my department with an 'asset-based: look what we've got!' perspective versus a 'deficit-based: look what we're missing!' perspective
- 11) The Dream Team mission statement was as follows:

With dynamic collaboration, honesty and transparency, the SFUAD Student Services Departments thoughtfully seek to enhance the student experience and engage our learners. We encourage open dialogue, new perspectives, and personal accountability. Cohesion, broad experiences, cooperation and humility together inspire an intentional community committed to the growth and development of our students. By embracing the inherent value of every individual, we shape the future of a contributing citizenry.

All members of the student services departments embrace these ideals.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

- 12) Other members of the student services departments would benefit from an Appreciative Inquiry workshop.
- 13) If other members of the student services departments engaged in the ideals of Appreciative Inquiry, cross-departmental collaboration would improve.

- 14) I feel empowered to contribute to a positive environment that fosters trust between individuals and departments. Why/How...
- 15) Celebrating successes with colleagues through cross-departmental events fosters trust.
- 16) Collaboration has increased since the AI summit between myself and other individuals who participated.
- 17) Collaboration has increased since the AI summit between myself and other members of the institution who did not participate.
- 18) Since the AI summit, I have had more positive interactions with teammates than before the AI summit.
- 19) Celebrating successes increase productivity.

Appendix 4.3 Record Sheets

Meeting Title: Institutional Metrics		
Meeting Date: 4-7-2015		
Participants	# of Positive Contributions	# of Negative Contributions
SL:1	4	2
SL:2		
SL:3		
SO:4		
SO:5		

Meeting Title: Institutional Metrics		
Meeting Date: 4-14-2015		
Participants	# of Positive Contributions	# of Negative Contributions
SL:1	6	3
SL:2		
SL:3		
SO:4		
SO:5		

Meeting Title: Institutional Metrics		
Meeting Date: 4-21-2015		
Participants	# of Positive Contributions	# of Negative Contributions
SL:1	5	1
SL:2		
SL:3		
SO:4		
SO:5		

Meeting Title: Institutional Metrics		
Meeting Date: 4-28-2015		
Participants	# of Positive Contributions	# of Negative Contributions
SL:1	2	4
SL:2		
SL:3		
SO:4		
SO:5		

Meeting Title: ArtFest/VEI Team Meeting		
Meeting Date: 4-16-2015		
Participants	# of Positive Contributions	# of Negative Contributions
SL:1		
SL:2	8	2
SL:3	3	3
SO:4		
SO:5		

Meeting Title: ArtFest/VEI Team Meeting		
Meeting Date: 4-23-2015		
Participants	# of Positive Contributions	# of Negative Contributions
SL:1		
SL:2	3	1
SL:3	5	2
SO:4		
SO:5		

Meeting Title: Retention		
Meeting Date: 4-8-2015		
Participants	# of Positive Contributions	# of Negative Contributions
SL:1		
SL:2		
SL:3		
SO:4	10	0
SO:5	4	3

Meeting Title: Retention		
Meeting Date: 4-22-2015		
Participants	# of Positive Contributions	# of Negative Contributions
SL:1		
SL:2		
SL:3		
SO:4	5	1
SO:5	8	2