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USING APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AND DIALOGICAL LEARNING TO EXPLORE DOMINANT PARADIGMS

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Experiential learning theory, conversational learning, and seminar practices combine to shape an educational experience that is grounded in principles of appreciative inquiry. The seminar, taught to undergraduate business majors, seeks to encourage students to explore their underlying assumptions about business in society. Because postindustrial globalization renders business and society interdependent, the innovative pedagogy assumes educators hold responsibility for creating and fostering new skills in business students. Critical thinking, self-awareness, and values analysis skills support students seeking to engage with and innovate based on perspectives different from their own. A transferable methodology is proposed.

Keywords: *pedagogy; undergraduate business curriculum; experiential learning; dialogical learning; appreciative inquiry*

Today's highly interdependent world increasingly requires business students to recognize and understand diverse perspectives. Understanding others requires an awareness of self. And self-awareness requires an understanding of one's conscious thinking as well as an understanding of the assumptions on which one's thinking rests. These assumptions are most often unstated, frequently subconscious, and therefore called "underlying assumptions." They form implicit criteria by which people evaluate situations and

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make decisions. For example, the dominant Western business paradigm rests on an underlying assumption valuing efficiency. An American traveler to Tanzania, where an underlying assumption values community, recommended to two women ways they could reorganize their work such that one of the two women could return to the village and complete other tasks. The women were confused and asked, "Why would we give a job to one person that two people can do just as well?" The American and the Tanzanians held different underlying assumptions about what "good work" meant.

Underlying assumptions serve to help us interpret data and formulate opinions. However, in doing so, underlying assumptions can also limit our ability to imagine alternatives that rest on different assumptions, particularly if we do not recognize the assumptions on which our ideas rest. Therefore, management educators hold an obligation to enhance students' ability to recognize their underlying assumptions. In doing so, educators teach students to responsibly engage with others, and with the diverse perspectives of others, in our increasingly global world.

Traditional pedagogy suggests a technical-functional approach to learning. Students receive knowledge from a professor, engage in problem solving, and seek to maximize wealth from autonomous points of view, for example, a single firm or an individual. Although appropriate for the metaphor of business as a machine (where parts can be exchanged and outcomes calculated), education increasingly needs to adapt to newer metaphors for business (such as business as a living system embedded in social ecosystems).

Increasingly, business requires students to step outside of themselves and consider alternatives to status quo. Competition has moved to a global scale, technology innovation increasingly has both beneficial and detrimental outcome possibilities, and people of many different belief systems seek to collaborate. Metaphorically, fish can benefit from attuning to their experience of swimming in and breathing water, their dominant paradigm in this analogy. This article explains a dialogical education process that seeks to teach students how to interact with each other and with their own belief systems in constructive, affirmative, and imaginative ways.

The course described here and its requisite teaching philosophy rest on underlying assumptions drawn from appreciative inquiry (AI), an organizational change approach. Conversational learning and experiential learning theory (ELT) combine to inform both the course process and design. The course uses a seminar format and seeks to engage students in anticipatory learning activities. This article outlines each theory, suggests additional resources for deeper theoretical study, and offers implementation suggestions for faculty seeking to conduct or to transfer the course concept into their own curriculum. I teach the seminar course to undergraduate business majors each year. Some of their experiences are included as well.

Assumptions: AI Principles

AI provides the theoretical stance for my classroom behavior and the curriculum design. AI is most commonly known as an organizational change approach whereby whole systems convene and inquire into that which brings life to the organization (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, 1990). AI assumes that all organizations, including a classroom, are living systems simultaneously influencing and being influenced by that which is around them. This matters pedagogically because it suggests that what happens in the classroom influences (and is influenced by) the students, the university community, and by extrapolation, the larger society. For a corporate organization, the implication holds that business is inextricably linked with local and global society. In fact, business can be perceived as interdependent with society.

AI recognizes the power of the whole. Whether individuals benefit from the sense of community and camaraderie of something larger than themselves, or whether ideas evolve with an enhanced richness when stemming from multiple voices, the organizational change approach brings representatives of whole systems into a dialogue. This holds in a classroom when students are perceived as valuable cocreators of whatever occurs. Similarly, whole systems have a holographic quality; representations of the whole and subsets of the whole can collaborate before taking their ideas out to other subsets. In the classroom, this implies that students are not only part of a short-term course configuration (generally about 15 weeks long), but students are also a microcosm of society at large. Therefore, by engaging in dialogue together in a seminar, the same students are learning to take their dialogical ability out into the larger society.

I outline the five most commonly discussed AI principles in Table 1. Originally described by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987), AI paradigm rests on these principles: the constructionist principle (suggesting that organizational destiny is interwoven with social knowledge), the principle of simultaneity (recognizing that change occurs with every intervention and inquiry), the poetic principle (describing organizations metaphorically as books being coauthored and cocreated by everyone involved), the anticipatory principle (insisting that our collective imagination holds the highest potential for anticipating possibilities and positive outcomes), and the positive principle (explaining that momentum for lasting positive change requires momentum, social bonding, and meaningful experiences). Each of these principles informs the stance I take in the course design proposed here (see Table 1 for direct pedagogical and teaching philosophy implications of each principle).

Cooperrider, Sorensen, Whitney, and Yaeger (2000) use these words among others to describe AI: “co-evolutionary,” “systematic discovery,”

TABLE 1

Principles of Appreciative Inquiry Informing Pedagogical Environment

The appreciative paradigm is based on the following principles:	Applied to dialogic learning environment, the principles offer the following foundational course design assumptions:
<p>The Constructionist Principle: Social knowledge and organizational destiny are interwoven. To be effective, all of us must be adept in the art of understanding, reading, and analyzing organizations as living human constructions.</p>	<p>Implication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-awareness supports understanding other. • Locus of knowledge is in the relationship with other. • Innovation can occur through collaboration. • “Inquiry projects” signify that paradigms are emergent bodies of knowledge.
<p>The Principle of Simultaneity: Here it is recognized that inquiry and change are not truly separate moments but are simultaneous. Inquiry is intervention. The seeds of organizational change are implicit in the very first questions we ask.</p>	<p>Implication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process by which we choose to engage students and the world matters. • Inquiring into that which is different can create intellectual and paradigmatic expansion.
<p>The Poetic Principle: A metaphor here is that human organizations are an open book. An organization's story is constantly being cocauthored or cocreated by those living in it.</p>	<p>Implication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student dialogue or opinions in this course cannot be “wrong”; they can only be more or less well-supported perspectives. • Teachers can often speak from a place of more experience and more reading than our students but not from a place of rightness or inherent authority. • “Inquiry projects” represent living and emergent systems, not proofs or defenses.
<p>The Anticipatory Principle: The most important resource we have for generating constructive organizational change or improvement is our collective imagination and our capacity to unleash the imaginations and minds of groups.</p>	<p>Implication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators hold responsibility for creating experiences whereby students learn to explore multiple perspectives beyond their own and to imagine beyond what is. • Anticipatory learning encourages students to explore the implications of their actions and perspectives, e.g., “if taken to its logical conclusion, your idea suggests . . .”
<p>The Positive Principle: Momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding—things such as hope, inspiration, caring, camaraderie, sense of urgent purpose, and sheer joy in creating something meaningful together are all essential to peak moments in organizational effectiveness.</p>	<p>Implication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiencing positive affect and social bonding in any setting, classroom seminar, or organization creates capacity for students to recreate positive affect and social bonding in other situations. • Students can reflect on and draw peak moments from their shared dialogic experience as well as they can draw peak moments from organizations later in life—the seminar becomes a training ground for positive potential.

SOURCE: Cooperrider, Sorensen, Whitney, & Yaeger (2000).

“what gives life,” and “constructively capable in the economic, ecological and human terms” (p. 3). In AI, whole systems convene because, as Whitney and Cooperrider (2000) say,

you get the sense that you are connected to a goodness that comes from the power of the whole. You realize you really need one another. . . . It eliminates false assumptions about other people and other groups. When you get to know someone you realize they aren't exactly what you imagined them to be. You develop compassion for different people instead of judgments. (p.15).

As an educator, I seek to evoke these capabilities within students. Therefore, I have designed a course where the focus is the inquiry and dialogical learning process. I seek to cultivate students who can imagine and understand what might become rather than students who merely accept what is.

My experience suggests that this approach appears radical (to some colleagues and to some students) because I emphasize the way in which readings and discussion can lead students to explore what most gives life to their beliefs. By doing so, I encourage students to actively become positive influences on all that they encounter, thereby fostering the capacity for life-long learning.

Teaching Approach: Anticipatory, Conversational, and Experiential Learning

The seminar format course described here most significantly contributes to management education because of the blended process resting on appreciative underlying assumptions discussed above. Therefore, course content explained here is done so for example purposes only. I encourage educators to transfer the approach into other curricula beyond undergraduate business where my course is offered.

Seminar experience. Like traditional seminars, my course convenes between 8 and 12 students to engage in conversation around text and ideas (see McCormick & Kahn, 1987, for tactical coaching on how to generate collaborative conversation in seminars). However, unlike traditional seminars, where the teacher has a clear impression of the key points students most need to grasp from the assigned readings and where the teacher serves to guide students through the text, here the teacher is a coexplorer. My job in the classroom is to facilitate exploration by listening for where students resonate. I then must inquire *with* students into that which brings and that which limits their energy. Yballe and O'Connor (2000) describe the role of teacher in appreciative pedagogy as “similar to a child in a candy store with limited time and a deluge of rich experiences, the professor must choose the experiences to make figural for the day” (p. 474).

My assumption is that the seminar group is a whole system composed of highly interdependent minds. I have no implicit hierarchical right to the best ideas. I rely on the AI assumption that goodness can be found in the whole. So rather than accentuating individual contributions, my own or those of others, my job is to accentuate the whole by identifying and lifting up for students the links and paradoxes among our ideas. Being part of the process encourages students to notice the power found in being part of an emergent dialogue larger than themselves. The process teaches awareness, on the part of faculty and students, and therefore requires mindful attention.

Anticipatory learning. Briefly, anticipatory learning (Botkin, Elmandjra, & Malitza, 1979) is a set of practices that aid people in understanding and doing what has never been done before. It depends on collaborative, socially constructed knowledge and is especially adept at preparing communities of people who must first learn before acting wisely in the world. For example, if as a collective we could adequately anticipate how waste from a new plant or a certain product could responsibly be disposed of, engineers might be better equipped to design to that anticipatory image.

Given that an educational objective in college is to train future leaders to listen and act wisely, teaching students to anticipate the outcomes or implications of their thinking helps. For instance, in the course, participants are encouraged to “try on” new ideas and roles different from roles they might normally play. So when we read about international financial markets, students are encouraged to anticipate what their lives might be like as a member of a very different socioeconomic class or as part of an ostracized minority group. In Western culture, with a business emphasis on decision making, execution, and outcomes, it is easy to engage in rapid action without anticipatory learning. (See Rhea, 2003, for a discussion about anticipatory learning in business applications.)

Conversational learning. Baker, Jensen, and Kolb (2005) define conversational learning as “a process whereby learners construct new meaning and transform their collective experiences into knowledge through their conversations” (p. 412). I address experiential learning below. At its core, though, conversational learning suggests that learners are constructing meaning among themselves as well as within themselves and that learners transform their collective experiences—both tacit and explicit—into knowledge. This differs significantly from the presumption that establishment and authority are responsible for and best equipped to create knowledge and meaning for others.

Conversational learning offers an alternative to what Friere (1973) calls the banker model of education. Rather than teachers depositing knowledge into students’ minds and asking students to withdraw requested ideas,

teachers foster conversation through which students engage in and make meaning of their experience with text and ideas. For example, a banker model discussion of reading materials would ensure that students grasp, and be prepared to recite during an exam, the author's key points. Conversational learning begins with the author's key points and relies on student discussion to experiment with interpretations that these points generate in their own thinking about their own perspectives about business. Therefore, an article about reconstructing a socialist economy post–World War II might become a conversational experience about which students can compare and contrast their views of capitalist economies. When socialist versus capitalistic economies are discussed in a banker model, the student need only remember the definition and key characteristics without needing to formulate and internalize his personal perspectives and views. If the student needs to recite information, he also now knows how to access it beyond himself. Knowledge and meaning therefore exist both within the individual and through a collective experience, as well as in the author's original text.

Baker et al. (2005) offer that conversational learning also can be the experiential learning component in Kolb's (1984) cycle of development for ELT. Kolb makes a case for conversational learning as the strongest mode of experiential learning and suggests that conversation is vital to understanding human experience (see Kayes, 2002, for implications and a review of critiques). Understanding our own human experience requires exploring the underlying assumptions on which our own views and value judgments rest.

ELT. Kolb's (1984) ELT emphasizes the central role experience plays in the learning process. At a theoretical level, Kolb asserts that individuals learn in multidimensional ways, actively apprehending and comprehending information and experiences by grasping experiences and by theoretically understanding an experience (see Figure 1). Experience then gets transformed into meaning or knowledge as a learner experiments with and reflects on theory. In accordance with Baker et al. (2005), I argue that the experience of focused conversation generates a valuable source of knowledge. The conversation I particularly seek in this course focuses students on introspective and interpersonal beliefs and views about business in society. The phenomenon we study is underlying assumptions of the dominant paradigm.

Experiential learning most commonly refers to education through hands-on and direct experience. Academia generally reserves *experiential* for pedagogy such as service learning, simulations, and field projects. Students respond well to applied projects. Therefore, this course includes an "inquiry project" as the hands-on, active experiential part of the design. The project, described in more depth below, seeks to extend students' classroom conversations by asking students to actively inquire into a particular topic or phenomenon of interest. Now, in addition to the conversational component of ELT, students benefit from the hands-on part of ELT. In both

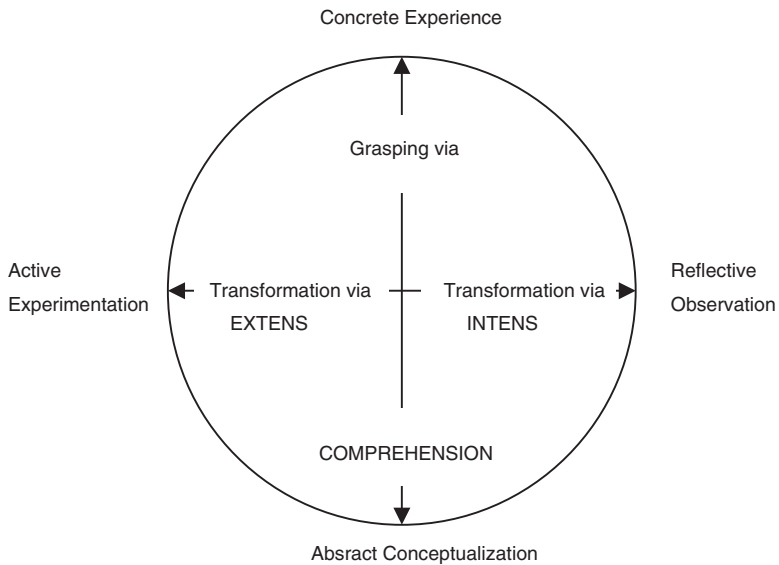


Figure 1: The Experiential Learning Cycle of Development
SOURCE: Kolb (1984).

approaches, the course seeks to encourage students to experience and create knowledge from “the inside out” rather than to rely only on expert knowledge to be allocated from the outside in (Hunt, 1987, p. 2).

By blending AI’s focus on fostering curiosity about that which gives life with ELT’s emphasis on beginning with one’s experience to create knowledge, the project facilitates student exploration of their own principles. Linking anticipatory learning theory and conversational learning theory suggests that through conversation about visions for a hopeful future, students manifest experience from which they can choose to engage the larger global system over time.

Curriculum and Course Design

The purpose for developing this course within a business curriculum stems from my belief that individuals can and do matter in shaping our present and therefore in shaping our future. As an educator, I am therefore responsible for teaching both the dominant and the marginal paradigms. My assumptions about 21st-century business rely on the belief that virtually every item on the global agenda for change can be addressed because (a) business and society are inextricably linked, (b) local action has global implication because all systems are interdependent, and (c) a sustainable

future requires individuals to have an awareness of and deep regard for the interdependent way in which our business and our human and environmental systems function. In this paradigm, neither business nor societies can be sustained for the long-term without the other. Therefore, I adopt the appreciative stance, convene a seminar, and encourage dialogical learning such that students begin to grasp both their responsibility for being wise and their own beliefs about how best to act wisely.

This course therefore holds a social change agenda as well as a life-long learning objective. For example, I ask students to anticipate the implications of our postindustrial economic perspective that advocates corporations' maximizing short-term financial profits. Maximization is a corporation's top priority. Quickly they consider environmental concerns, worker and human rights movements, intricate global trade relationships, and corporate ethical scandals. However, when I introduce the possibility that a company might manage to a triple bottom line—profit, people, and planet (Elkington, 1998)—students quickly become nervous. Their well-developed sense of competition comes out. They might believe a triple bottom line is conceptually attractive, but they do not want to manage a company to anything but the financial bottom line because the first movers doing so “will get their lunch eaten” (student comment). Some then formulate inquiry projects to explore companies that have in fact begun managing to a triple bottom line. By asking students to engage conversationally, to inquire appreciatively, and to design their ideal future world experientially, the course seeks to foster in tomorrow's business leaders a belief in what might be possible.

This seminar course develops leadership values and competencies in identity formation for the 21st century. Specifically, students are asked to do three things: build AI skills as a method for seeking best practices, expand their theoretical and practical understanding of the global life-web often invisible to business decision makers, and articulate their underlying assumptions about business. These expectations transfer to other disciplines because although content and theoretical paradoxes change by discipline, the challenge remains to teach students how to recognize complex assumptions and how to anticipate consequences of action and of inaction.

Student population. This approach has been used for five semesters with undergraduate business majors in a small liberal arts college in Texas. In general, these 20- to 21-year-old students come from upper-middle-class, regional backgrounds. They tend to be more politically and fiscally conservative than nonbusiness students on the campus. They have limited, if any, experience with self-directed learning, and few have studied cross-culturally or traveled internationally (family vacations being the exception). Therefore assignments—readings, discussions, and projects—are constructed to dialogically engage students in that which is foreign to them.

Reading assignments. To “engage” students, I attempt to meet the students where they generally are. I work to overcome students’ natural defenses, psychological fight–flight responses, by beginning with ideas and content likely to be paradigmatically comfortable for them. Early, I assign readings analyzing as is. Readings first come from established sources, such as the *Economist*. I encourage self-reflection about perceptions of the college community and their position in it (often marginal among peers). And we discuss the “truths” they hold from their family of origin. My early objective is creating “safe space” for honest conversation.

By the second module, the content becomes more provocative. My experience suggests that students engage in provocative literature only when a class culture exists in which they feel safe from grade penalty and safe from peer pressure or faculty judgment. “Safe space” is essential to this process. One example reading in the second module comes from Wolfgang Sachs’s (1992) *Development Dictionary*. Sachs edited the volume of perspectives about globalization and industrial development; the authors speak from marginalized and minority paradigms. One chapter challenges the notion that industrialization is inherently worthwhile, and the second critiques the dominance conveyed through the language choice when a country is described as “Third” World. For many students, these readings serve to spotlight their personal and implicit assumptions that all countries are better off in all ways when following an American industrialized-development model. As faculty, I encourage students to try on alternatives to better understand their existing beliefs.

A third content module focuses on moments of anticipatory learning (Botkin et al., 1979), organizations choosing environmentally or socially sustainable structures and behaviors, and cases of nontraditional collaboration. I assign Willis Harman’s (1998) book *Global Mind Change* as an example of a paradigmatic change with anticipatory and appreciative aspirations. By the time students reach this content module, they are generally more open to dialogical learning than at the semester’s beginning. Therefore, the experiential aspect of dialogical learning becomes more significant.

Inquiry project. In addition to the classroom engagement, students conduct an “inquiry project.” The objective of the project is to foster imagination of what might be possible within a topic of the student’s choice. The inquiry project is titled as such because, distinct from a traditional research paper in which students seek to develop an authoritative perspective, this project encourages students to inquire into a topic’s global implications, to seek out and incorporate multiple perspectives on the topic, and through the process, to learn more about one’s own underlying assumptions about the world (as well as those of alternative perspectives).

TABLE 2
Evaluation Rubric for Inquiry Project

<i>Project Stage</i>	<i>1: Topic Choice</i>	<i>2: Progress Report</i>	<i>3: Development Presentation</i>	<i>4: Final Project</i>
Project grade weight	15%	15%	Not graded	70%
Learning objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify an issue of personal significance • Experience appreciative frame on an issue • Practice project management skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice project management skills • Practice telling a systematic story from disparate data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present complex ideas orally and concisely • Identify and clearly articulate a felt need • Lead a group in dialogic learning experience • Open one's thinking to insight and contribution from others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate an awareness of that which is different from self • Foster innovative learning • Foster felt sense of regard for other (social responsibility) • Encourage cross-disciplinary thinking • Experience inquiry as form of life-long learning
Success criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies an issue and focal question relating (broadly) to an intersection between business and society • Outlines issue • Lists preliminary appreciative questions for interviews • Identifies three potential interviewees • Is written clearly and concisely in memo format 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic clearly framed in appreciative stance • Documents progress exploring perspectives (primary or secondary sources) • Demonstrates evolved thinking about the topic • Is written clearly and concisely in memo format 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages classmates in conversation about own topic • Demonstrates ability to learn from and with others through conversation • Demonstrates willingness to advance own thinking through feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes a critical stance on an issue relevant to course content and to student's personal or professional interest • Identifies and explores underlying assumptions (own and others') • Integrates ideas from multiple sources • Incorporates insights from at least four AI interviews, at least two with non-Americans, and at least one with someone holding explicitly different view than one's own • Demonstrates writing proficiency

NOTE: The inquiry project represents 40% of a student's total course grade. Forty percent is earned by attending and actively participating in class discussions and activities. Twenty percent is earned through a midsemester essay exam that asks students to formulate personal perspectives about business and society supported and challenged by course readings to date.

Because human systems move in the direction of what they study, students' choice of what to study—what to focus systemic attention on—is both essential and strategic in the larger course objective (encouraging students to grapple with their own underlying assumptions about business in society). The project teaches inquiry as an approach to life-long learning, requires that students seek out and engage with people whose perspectives differ from their own, and insists they consider their topic from multiple disciplinary perspectives. The perspectives include, among others, management, economics, sociology, and history. Table 2 summarizes the project's learning objectives and success criteria.

Topic selection. The appreciative perspective often makes sense to students in abstract conceptual terms far more quickly than in experience. The topic selected ultimately provides a framework for collecting stories, discovering and sharing best practices, and creating a knowledge-rich view of business possibilities in our diverse world. Therefore, I invest time in preparing students theoretically and experientially in AI as a way to introduce the project.

To explore AI theory, I rely on traditional course materials drawn from available sources such as Cooperrider et al. (2000). I explain AI as a process for organizational change, show appreciative interview guides used by corporations, and give students techniques for conducting open-ended interviews. Then, I engage them experientially. I ask students to conduct mini-appreciative interviews about their own peak learning and educational experiences. Students are paired and asked to look back at their lifetime of education and learning to recall an experience or time when they felt most alive and involved in and excited about their learning. They interview each other and practice reporting back to the class. The data generated collectively provide students the opportunity to practice noticing themes and patterns among their stories.

Armed with a modicum of hands-on experience and a handful of theory papers, students are asked to select and frame a topic into which they want to inquire (see Table 3 for guidelines and questions useful in stimulating student thinking). The ensuing inquiry draws on primary and secondary data, blends personal and external perspectives, and seeks possibilities rather than definitive proofs or statistically reliable outcomes. Students agree with me on deadlines for the following three checkpoints and final outcome. The final product serves as their seminar course final exam.

Stage 1: Inquiry Memo 1, topic choice. Students draft a memo outlining their inquiry topic, including potential appreciative questions they might use to interview others. At this stage, however, students often inadvertently present deficit-based problem statements and outline a research path to “prove” rather than to inquire. By writing this memo, students experience

TABLE 3
Ideas for Framing Your Inquiry Topic

The following questions help prompt students to identify and to reflect on topics of particular interest or personal concern.

Guiding ideas to keep in mind:

1. Choose something really interesting to you about business and the world.
2. Recall the “question” you formulated on the first day of class—if everyone in the world would think about one question, what would you most want that question to be?
3. Is there an industry or an agenda you hope to pursue after graduation and/or later in life? How can this project move you to a place of deeper understanding?
4. Remember that this project is about inquiring (an action orientation); stay in a space of curiosity and action, even though the assignment looks like your average research paper.

Sample ideas to ponder from questions you have posed in class:

1. What does “agency” look like when moving from stockholder thinking to stakeholder thinking? What is agency theory? How does it play out in small businesses? In corporations? How does agency change/get more complicated when within one nation compared to when occurring across national boundaries? When a small company along an international supply chain compared to an international corporation or a global corporation?
2. In what ways might we innovate on our current market economy thinking for global wealth creation?
3. How might business be a catalyzing force for peace in a world of transnational business?
4. How are some companies innovating beyond accusations that “globalization means a race to the bottom on labor and environmental standards?”

the difficulty for all of us who are trained in and socially steeped in problem-based thinking, opening our curiosity to appreciate rather than prove or disprove perspectives different than our own. For example, rather than inquiring into violence in urban areas, a student begins to shift his focus to inquiring into the possibility for safety in the streets. Generally, I coach such a shift by asking anticipatory questions. Doing so supports students in reframing their topic construction such that the outcomes might be generative possibilities (safe streets) rather than clearer problem situations (violence in urban areas). See Table 4 contrasting topic choices from a problem-solving and an appreciative perspective.

Stage 2: Inquiry Memo 2, progress report. Approximately 3 weeks later, students submit a second memo outlining their progress to date. I encourage students to codify where they are in their work rather than seek to retrofit their report to match Memo 1. The inquiry topic has generally changed

TABLE 4
Sample Research Questions: Problem Solving
Contrasted with Appreciative Inquiry

<i>Problem-Solving Approach</i>	<i>Appreciative-Inquiry Approach</i>
“Felt need”	Appreciating and valuing
Identification of problem	The best of “what is”
Q: What’s the biggest problem with Superfund sites: contaminating surrounding neighborhoods, cleaning the sites after use, or companies’ funding alternative disposal means?	Q: What public policies and business practices exist that simultaneously enhance a business’s financial efficiency <i>and</i> our community-level environmental sensitivity?
Analysis of causes	Envisioning “what might be”
Q: What are the dominant reasons futurists say our global social system is not sustainable?	Q: What enhances social system sustainability?
Analysis of possible solutions	Dialoguing “what should be”
Q: How can GDP better measure a country’s well-being, because national production measures do not seem to reflect individual happiness?	Q: What should we be measuring if we most want to understand different nations’ long-term, holistic well-being?
Action planning (Treatment)	Innovating “what will be”
Q: What can we, regular citizens, do to educate politicians about how measures such as GDP do and do not really represent a country’s well-being?	Q: What actions can we, regular citizens, take to cultivate public policies that help foster a socially and fiscally just world in light of our transnational interdependencies?

NOTE: The table represents types of research questions and sample areas of student curiosity framed as problem-solving questions and reframed as appreciative-inquiry topics. This builds on Cooperrider and Srivastva’s (1987) framework for shifting from a problem-solving to an appreciative-inquiry approach.

(often rather significantly) between the topic choice memo and this progress report. Students include here their *evolved* thinking about the topic, progress to date, work in progress, and a critical analysis of perspectives (one’s own and others’) identified to date. Finally, students are asked to anticipate what questions and challenges they might soon face. Doing so not only supports anticipatory thinking, but it also lets them begin to think about how to use their Stage 3 class time.

Stage 3: Project development presentations. Students self-organize to present their work in progress to classmates. The objective is to collaboratively and dialogically improve their work toward a final written project. In Kahn’s (1974) language about seminars, this exercise challenges students to construct a “barn-raising” experience rather than “beauty contest.” Remember, students

are preprogrammed that presentations mean formal telling rather than developmental opportunities to inquire with others. Faculty coaching helps. Every student is expected to participate in the development of each other's ideas.

Stage 4: Final inquiry project. This written culmination becomes the seminar course final exam. By this stage, students have expanded their perspectives and often changed their own underlying assumptions from where they began in Stage 1. Interviews, theory, and personal experience form the discovery and dream phases of AI, and students are expected to write discussions that move dreams forward toward designing business, social, and economic practices for the 21st century. Best papers therefore read as tapestries of ideal visions, varied perspectives, and mainstream as well as marginalized voices.

The Teaching Plan: Facilitating Inquiry and Following Emergent Interests

Success and failure for a teacher in this course depend on one's own ability to create and hold safe dialogical space for students, to create a sense of dignity in their learning process, and to nudge students when they demonstrate curiosity or an emerging interest in topics. This success measure is markedly different than a traditional classroom, where a teacher's success can be measured by the teacher's ability to cover complex materials and the students' ability to "do well" on tests reciting or processing learned material. Here, the foremost objective in a daily teaching plan includes awareness and facilitation of the inquiry process.

Maintaining awareness requires tremendous invisible work. A teacher must simultaneously stay aware of self, of personal biases and beliefs, of student interest, of group dynamics, of seminar techniques, and of teaching objective (creating safe and appreciative dialogic space in which students can notice and grapple with their own underlying assumptions). Several times per semester, a student asks me, "What are we going to do today?" Ideally, I am present enough to gently respond, "I don't know, but in about 75 minutes I'll let you know what I think we did." (Sincerity matters lest such a response be perceived as cynical and therefore threatening.) This response requires letting go of my hope for what might occur and believing that what occurs is inherently valuable; letting go of my intention for selecting or assigning the particular reading at the particular time, believing that cocreated dialogue can quite possibly generate better outcomes than I could independently design; and letting go of my preconceived ideas about what students most need to absorb in the coming session, trusting that they will absorb what they most need for their learning journey.

Faculty must believe in the pedagogical process to safely encourage students to join the new approach to learning. For example, students experience enormous frustration with me for “not teaching” based on their own learned behaviors that “good teachers” tell and “good students” listen. Similarly, positivistic science encourages students to prove or disprove rather than to inquire into possibilities, alternatives, and difference. Therefore, the inquiry project (inquiring into perspectives different from your own) challenges students with critical thinking but also evokes psychological resistance of doing that which runs paradigmatically counter to their socialization. Faculty must remain humble, confident, and alert to navigate this process.

Student Performance and Feedback: Preliminary Results

Students generally emerge from the process demonstrating a high degree of critical thinking, a solid inquiry, and sometimes even profound views about business. Course evaluation feedback includes comments such as “I really had to think in this course,” “This is what college is supposed to be about,” and “Fantastic.” However, the journey can be difficult; students and I both experience early frustration with the slow process. For example, by Week 3, students begin to get anxious about whether they are actually learning because they have listened to each other rather than listened to me lecture. By Week 5, if students are ignoring the readings, my temptation to threaten students with an extra quiz or test surges. When discussion shifts from assigned readings to job searches or a weekend activity, my task becomes identifying links and open-ended questions that reengage students in the larger course dialogue.

Holding to the process remains crucial. But our conditioning works against us—students and faculty-learner alike. We experientially learn in elementary and high schools that as students, we are bank vaults to be filled with the gold wisdom dispensed by the teacher. When the teacher asks for a withdrawal, we the students are expected to regurgitate back precisely what the teacher has solicited. Freire (1973) attributes the dumbing down to a state of oppressor–oppressed that this “banker model” of education creates.

Relevant to this course, faculty must remain sensitive to the pedagogical implications of asking students to inquire openly into their assumptions; culturally, students have dutifully learned that such curiosity is not what makes them “successful” in traditional academic settings. Indeed, students find both authentic dialogue and naming their personal passions exciting yet often difficult. Both are required for successful experiences.

Faculty face similar (and often equally difficult) challenges semester long. We are trained to dispense wisdom, to evaluate and pass judgment on, and to assign a grade to each of “our” students. To create safe dialogic

space in which students can legitimately explore, the challenge often is simply to be quiet. This pedagogy calls on the student to experience and inquire; this differs from a traditional seminar where faculty might be actively involved and directive in shaping the discussion. Here, the outcomes of any session cannot easily be forecasted. Because students are well conditioned to regurgitate what the faculty professes, the risk is very high for faculty to let their own views, underlying assumptions, and personal passions for inquiry topics influence what students perceive as valuable or, worse, "right." Therefore, the faculty challenge remains to create safe space for authentic interaction and to engage in ways that stir students to question and explore their own perspectives.

Limitations, Adaptations, and Transferability

Students need a core body of knowledge in their selected disciplines. This course design does not test apprehension or comprehension of explicit knowledge. The design is not always the right curricular choice. A second limitation is the high degree of interpersonal competence required of faculty. Even though the design and process imply that students should inquire, doing so makes students vulnerable in the moment. Therefore, faculty must have a reputation among students of being what students might describe as "on our side." And faculty must have skills at facilitating group and interpersonal dynamics.

I have tested this process only with undergraduate students who are moderately homogenous. Theoretically, the approach is transferable to graduate students and to multinational or transnational business practitioners. Content would follow the same stages (paradigmatically familiar, provocative, anticipatory) but could easily vary by situation.

The homogeneity in my students helps to foster psychological safety among them; still, I insist that we cocreate ground rules during the first sessions and that students actively hold each other accountable for the ground rules. A paradigmatically more diverse group might require added attention in the early stages of the group's life.

The approach is rewarding and risky. Life-long learning and innovation abilities emerge where curiosity and affirmation exist. Therefore, a teacher creates lasting change by cultivating that curiosity and by demonstrating paradigmatic shifts toward principles of appreciative inquiry. In fact, the very act of engaging myself in writing this article has itself created change by cultivating my curiosity about what I choose to do and by refining my own awareness of underlying assumptions about education that I hold dear. My hope is that students themselves will experience this article and my participant-observer stance as an example of how they too might continuously build meaning out of their experiences.

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