If You Want an Innovative Organization, Dream Big and Collaborate Often: An Empirical Test of the Validity of Frank Barrett's Appreciative Learning Cultures Model

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Abstract

In his classic work on appreciative learning cultures, Frank Barrett (1995) claims that consistent organizational innovation requires generative (as opposed to adaptive) learning, which involves an appreciative approach. He proposes that organizations with appreciative learning cultures develop a specific set of competencies necessary for them to flourish and survive. They include:

1. Affirmative competence—the capacity to appreciate positive possibilities by selectively focusing on current and past strengths, successes, and potentials;
2. Expansive competence—the capacity to challenge habits and conventional practices, provoking members to experiment in the margins, make expansive promises that stretch them in new directions, and evoke values and ideals that inspire them to passionate engagement;
3. Generative competence—the capacity to construct integrative systems that allow members to see the consequences of their actions, to recognize that they are making a meaningful contribution, and to experience a sense of progress;
4. Collaborative competence—the capacity to create forums in which members engage in ongoing dialogue and exchange diverse perspectives.

This study uses Q-sort techniques, multidimensional scaling, and hierarchical clustering to test the validity of Barrett's four competencies, with the goal of beginning the process of creating a validated instrument to measure appreciative learning cultures in organizations.

The results confirm the validity of Barrett's expansive and collaborative competencies but call for further development of his affirmative and generative competencies. In addition, the study offers an intriguing finding about the limitations of traditional survey methods used to measure appreciative dynamics in organizations. Negatively worded items in the Q-sort rarely clustered with their positively worded counterparts. This suggests that to measure the presence of a positive aspect of culture with a negative indicator may be invalid, thus lending support to a fundamental premise of appreciative inquiry: that appreciative inquiry and problem-solving are two distinct modes of knowing. Problem solving may be effective for making something negative go away, but it is ineffective for bringing something new into being. The implications of these findings for research and practice are elaborated.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Appreciation is like looking through a wide-angle lens that lets you see the entire forest, not just the one tree limb you walked up on.

—Doc Childre and Sara Paddision, HeartMath Discovery Program

Appreciative learning cultures (ALCs) is an important topic because of its tie to positive psychology and its potential for generative learning, which fosters organizational innovation, and can easily fit into existing interventions. In essence, appreciative learning cultures are based on merger learning culture theory and appreciative approaches to organizational development and change. In his composition of appreciative learning cultures, Barrett (1995) makes a crucial distinction between adaptive learning and generative learning, which has ramifications for positive approaches to organizations and their functioning. Barrett proposes that generative learning involves an appreciative approach—an ability to see radical possibilities beyond the boundaries of problems as they present themselves in conventional terms. High-performing organizations that engage in generative, innovative learning are competent at appreciating potential and possibility. They surpass the limitations of apparently "reasonable" solutions and consider rich possibilities not foreseeable within conventional analysis.

Adaptive learning, on the other hand, focuses on responding to and coping with environmental demands in an effort to make incremental improvements to existing services, products, and markets. It is similar to what Chris Argyris (1982) calls "single loop learning," which focuses on solving current problems without questioning the framework that generated those problems. Although a positive approach may be beneficial, it is not necessary to fulfill more tangible objectives. Innovation, on the other hand, requires generative learning, which emphasizes continuous experimentation, systemic rather than fragmented thinking, and a willingness to think outside the accepted limitations of a problem. It goes beyond the framework that created current conditions that adaptive learning takes for granted. And in this regard, it requires a positive, appreciative approach.

The Limitations of Adaptive Learning

Barrett (1995) contrasts this appreciative approach with the traditional problem solving method in which people notice what is wrong, search for causes, and propose solutions. This mechanistic approach to inquiry hinges on the belief that problems can be isolated, broken down into parts, repaired, and then restored to wholeness. Unfortunately, this approach to learning has limitations. First, it is inherently conservative. When people approach problems from the same mindset that created them, they rarely create new, innovative possibilities. Instead, they simply learn to cope within existing constraints.

Second, it furthers a deficiency orientation. Organizations that expend great energy fixing what is wrong often create the sense that no matter how many problems are solved, something is bound to go wrong soon. This can lead to a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness: No matter how well we do, something will always go wrong.

Third, problem-oriented mindset causes people to break complex things into small parts, thus ignoring the systemic, interactive nature of the world. This can cause new problems elsewhere in the system and create silos of experts, none of whom understand the system in its entirety.

Finally, it can destroy cooperation and fragment relationships. If something is broken, it must be someone's fault. People become invested in fixing blame and defending their positions. This often leads to excessive competition, a serious impediment to learning.

The Limitations of Problem Solving

Problem solving, says Barrett (1995), is different from creating. A problem solver tries to make something go away, while a creator tries to bring something new into being. He quotes Karl Jung on how his patients overcame dysfunctional patterns and self-defeating routines by bringing "something new into being," in this case a new perspective:

> All the greatest and most important problems in life are fundamentally insoluble . . . They can never be solved, but only outgrown. This "outgrowing' proved on further investigation to require a new level of consciousness. Some higher or wider interest appeared on the patient's horizon, and through this broadening on his or her outlook the insoluble problem lost its urgency. It was not solved logically in its own terms but faded when confronted with a new and stronger life urge. (Psychological Types. London: Pantheon Books, 1923; cited in Barrett, 1995, p. 39)

High-performing organizations learn to escape from problem-solving patterns of inquiry, finding ways to nurture "a new and stronger life urge" that inquires into new possibilities. The art of appreciation is the art of discovering and valuing those factors that give life to the organization, of identifying what is best in the current organization. Such gestures create "generative conversations," as members' inquiries expand from valuing the best of "what is" to envisioning "what might be." While problem solving emphasizes a dispassionate and unbiased separation between observer and observed, appreciation is a passionate, absorbing endeavor. It involves the investment of emotional and cognitive energy to create a positive image of a desired future.

An Introduction to Appreciative Learning Cultures

In his work on appreciative learning cultures, Barrett (1995, p. 48) defines *appreciative learning* cultures as "Cultures that nurture innovative thinking by fostering an affirmative focus, expansive thinking, a generative sense of meaning, and creating collaborative systems." He suggests that an organization's capacity to discover, make clear, and leverage its positive core is strengthened when the

organization develops a specific set of competencies necessary to support the survival and flourishing of the system. They include:

1. *Affirmative competence*—the capacity to appreciate positive possibilities by selectively focusing on current and past strengths, successes, and potentials;
2. *Expansive competence*—the capacity to challenge habits and conventional practices, provoking members to experiment in the margins, make expansive promises that stretch them in new directions, and evoke values and ideals that inspire them to passionate engagement;
3. *Generative competence*—the capacity to construct integrative systems that allow members to see the consequences of their actions, to recognize that they are making a meaningful contribution, and to experience a sense of progress;
4. *Collaborative competence*—the capacity to create forums in which members engage in ongoing dialogue and exchange diverse perspectives.

After reviewing Barrett's (1995) article and other works on appreciative inquiry, I thought that two additional competencies were implicitly, but not explicitly, captured in Barrett's original formulation. Thus, the following two competencies were later developed, defined, and added to the research study:

1. *Anticipatory competence*—the capacity to create and enact positive guiding images of the future
2. *Inquisitive competence*—the capacity to learn and develop confidence by encouraging people to be curious and inquisitive, and to ask positive questions

The anticipatory and inquisitive competencies were tested to see if they were valid and if, in fact, they could be distinguished from Barrett's (1995) original four-competencies model.

There are six strong propositions for what makes up an appreciative learning culture (ALC). They include the following:

- An appreciative learning culture is constructed with an affirmative competency.
- An appreciative learning culture is constructed with an expansive competency.
- An appreciative learning culture is constructed with a generative competency.
- An appreciative learning culture is constructed with a collaborative competency.
- An appreciative learning culture is constructed with an anticipatory competency.
- An appreciative learning culture is constructed with an inquisitive competency.

The biggest unknown is whether these six constructs correspond to how organizational executives think. This dissertation conducts inquiry into executive comprehension by using Q-sort techniques, multidimensional scaling (MDS), and hierarchical clustering to test the validity of these constructs. The purpose of these tests was to expose, or reveal, the "psychological space" representing items

constituting an appreciative learning culture; or in other words, to see if the *a priori* assumptions embedded in the six competencies mentioned above could be confirmed. The methodology exposes the extent to which the subjects of this study (executives from companies) think of their organizations in terms of the appreciative learning competencies. Do the executive respondents understand the competencies as they are laid out above, or do they think about them differently? From their perspective, are there four competencies, six competencies, or some other number? What else does the "psychological space" tell us about appreciative learning cultures?

Based on my literature review and my experience with this subject, these are some of the basic questions I chose to investigate in this study:

- *Do executives comprehend Barrett's four-competency model of appreciative learning cultures in the way it has been theorized and constructed?*
- *Do executives comprehend an inquisitive competency as distinct from an affirmative, expansive, generative, or collaborative competency?*
- *Do executives comprehend an anticipatory competency as distinct from an affirmative, expansive, generative, or collaborative competency?*

An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry (AI) is the study and exploration of what gives life to human systems when they function at their best. It is based on the assumption that every living system has a hidden and underutilized core of strengths—its positive core—which, when revealed and tapped, provides a sustainable source of positive energy for

both personal and organizational transformation (Ludema, Whitney, Mohr, & Griffin, 2003, p. 8).

AI is also an approach to inquiry and anticipatory learning, not just a desire to be positive. It assumes that in any organization, knowledge and information can be widely distributed and collaboratively created through conversation about the-best-of-what-is-and-can-be. When a broad spectrum of stakeholders undertakes such positive conversations, AI enables organizational learning and spurs inventiveness throughout the system. It builds cooperative capacity by allowing organizational members to understand one another's perspective and by providing them a direct and immediate connection to the "logic of the whole."

AI distinguishes itself as an exclusively strength-based approach. It privileges attention to strengths, life-giving forces, and success factors over root causes of problems, deficits, or breakdowns. This approach is based on the understanding that a deep connection with strengths provides organizational members with a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which in turn elicits positive emotions such as interest, joy, hope, and pride. AI creates energy for action by boosting positive emotions and increasing an organization's overall intelligence, creativity, resilience, and cooperative capacity.

Barrett's views on appreciative learning cultures build on the theories surrounding appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987), a positive approach to organization development and change that, since its creation in the early 1980s, has been widely researched and applied around the world. AI got its start in the early 1980s when Cooperrider, Barrett, and other colleagues at Case Western Reserve University were doing an organization change project with the Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio. They found that when they used the traditional organization development (OD) approach of problem diagnosis and feedback, the energy for change did not materialize. According to Ludema & Fry (2008), the more problems people discovered, the more discouraged they became; and, the more discouraged they became, the more they began to blame one another for the problems. In fact, when Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) noticed this same dynamic (discouragement and blame) occurring amongst themselves and their colleagues as they tried to analyze their interview data, they clearly saw the power of the questions they were using—on themselves. They and their colleagues saw, first hand, that the questions they asked were having an unexpected impact on the human system they were trying to understand and to improve.

Second, Cooperrider and Srivastva discovered that their work was more powerful when they let go of the very idea of intervening. Instead of *intervention* they framed their task as *inquiry*—simply to be students of organizational life, to learn, to discover, and to appreciate everything that gave "life" to the system when it was most

vibrant, effective, successful, and healthy in relation to its whole system of stakeholders. In their analysis of the data, Cooperrider and Srivastva engaged in a radical reversal of the traditional problem-solving approach.

Influenced by the writings of Schweitzer (1969) on "reverence for life," they focused on everything they could find that appeared to empower and energize the system, everything contributing to excellence and high performance at the clinic. Even though, in the early stages, they still asked some traditional diagnostic questions (such as "Tell us about the biggest problem facing you as a chairman of your department"), they decided later, in preparing their feedback report, to include and emphasize an analysis of all the generative themes: moments of success; experiences of high points; and stories of innovation, hope, courage, and positive change. Instead of doing a root-cause analysis of failure, they let go of every so-called deficiency and turned full attention to analysis of root causes of success.

The results were immediate and dramatic. Relationships improved, cooperation increased, and visible commitments by the physicians to change initiatives ensued. When Cooperrider and Srivastva presented the outcomes of the inquiry to the clinic board, the report created such a powerful and positive stir that the board asked to use the method with the entire organization of 8,000 people. They called the approach "appreciative inquiry," and the term first appeared in a footnote in this feedback report to the members of the Cleveland Clinic board. A few years later they published

their classic article "Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life" (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987), articulating the theory and vision of appreciative inquiry as an exciting paradigm shift for the fields of action research and organizational change. It was a call, as they wrote for a scholarship of the positive..

Barrett and Fry (2005) describe AI as a strength-based approach to transforming human systems toward a shared image of their most positive potential by first discovering the very best in their shared experiences. It is not about implementing a change to get somewhere; it is about chang*ing* …convening, conversing and relating with each another in order to tap into the natural capacity for cooperation and change that is in every system. At its core, AI is an invitation for members to enhance the generative capacity of dialogue; to attend to the ways that our conversations, particularly our metaphors and stories, facilitate action that support our highest values and our potential. An appreciative inquiry effort seeks to create metaphors, stories, and generative conversations that break the hammerlock of the status quo and open up new vistas and alternative forms of activities that support our highest values.

A Framework for Intervention: The Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Model

Appreciative learning competencies are inherent within the success of any AI intervention. The practical value of assessing appreciative learning competencies is visible through Cooperrider's 4-D model, where ALC competencies are clearly intertwined with the phases of the intervention.

The 4-D models' root cause analysis is different from conventional managerial problem solving. The key task in problem solving is to identify and remove deficits. The process typically involves (1) identifying problems, (2) analyzing causes, (3) searching for solutions, and (4) developing an action plan.

In contrast, according to (Cooperrider, 1990), the key task in AI is to identify and leverage strengths. The steps in the 4-D model (as cited in Ludema & Fry, 2008, p. 8) include (1) discovery of the best of what is, (2) dream to imagine what could be, (3) design what will be, and (4) destiny; to enact change learning to become what we most hope for (see Figure 1). Following is an overview of the appreciative inquiry 4-D model:

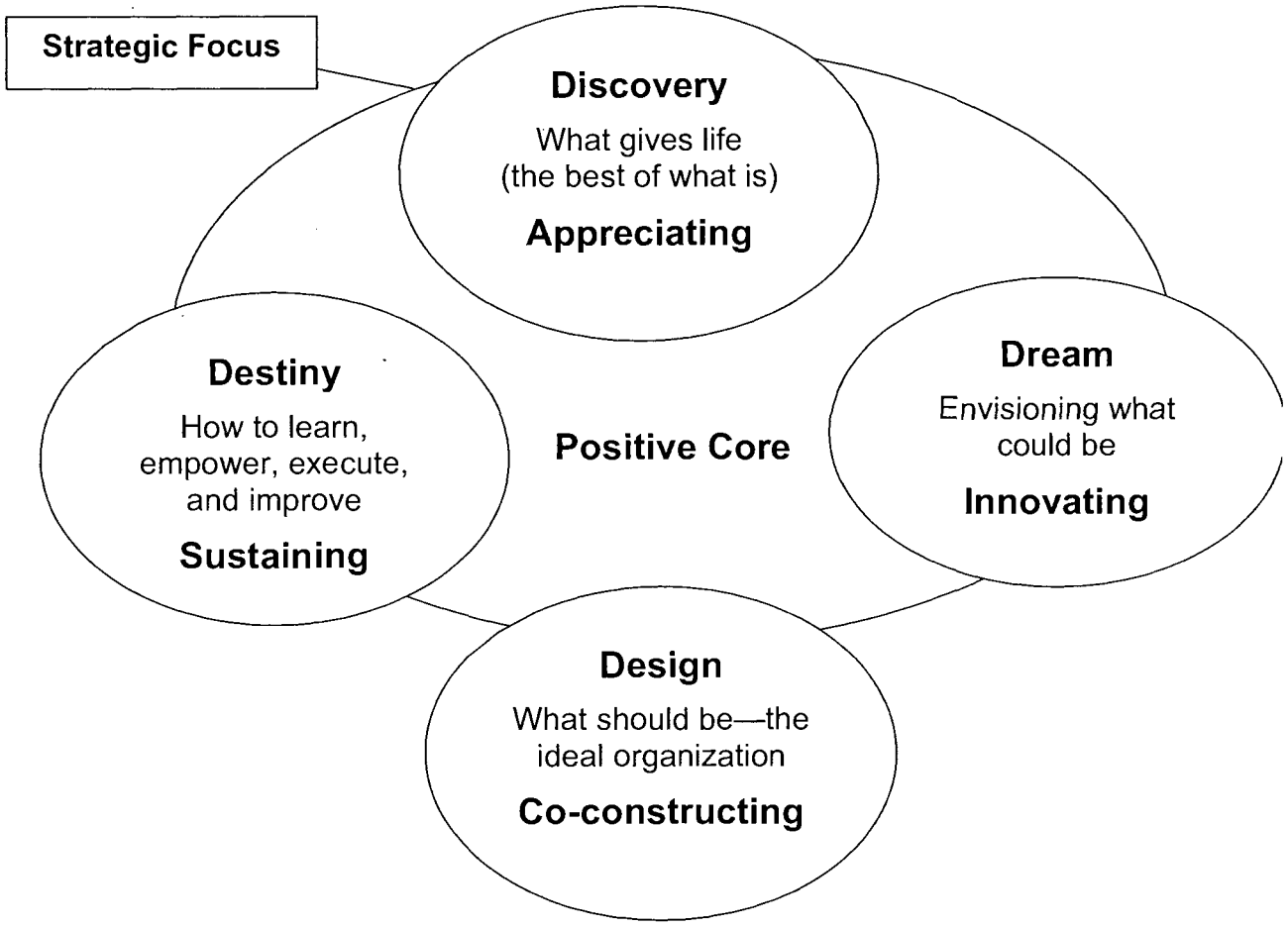


Figure 1. Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Model

The discovery phase of the 4-D model, discovering the best of what is, correlates to the affirmative competency. The dream phase is certainly tied to innovation and the expansive competency. The design and destiny phases have generative characteristics. And, the entire 4-D model is built on the spirit of ongoing dialog and fostering collaboration.

Lastly, a validation of the constructs of ALCs will benefit the practice of AI. A clear understanding of the appreciative strengths of the ALC will help the practitioner design their intervention since inherent within the design is the need to identify the positive core and appreciative strengths.

Overview of This Dissertation

Following this introduction are five chapters that address the relevant literature used to develop appreciate inquiry and its a priori constructs within appreciative learning cultures; the overall analytical approach and methods employed in this study; the results of the Q-sort, multi-dimensional scaling, and hierarchical cluster analysis; discussion and interpretation of the findings; and implications for further research and practice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

> *Executives are beginning to see that perhaps their most important task is the creation of learning cultures—contexts in which members can explore, experiment in the margins, extend capabilities, and anticipate customers' latent needs.*
>
> —Frank J. Barrett, 1995, p. 36

This chapter focuses on Frank Barrett's article on appreciative learning cultures (ALCs). I have chosen to take a very tight focus on this article because the emphasis of this dissertation is to complete a preliminary test of the validity of Barrett's competencies. As is apparent, within the introductory chapter, I included much of the context within which Barrett developed the competencies. However, while this context is important background information, it is somewhat tangential to the focus of this dissertation.

The Competencies of Appreciative Learning Systems

Barrett (1995) states that ALCs accentuate the successes of the past, evoke images of possible futures, and create a spirit of restless, ongoing inquiry that empowers members to new levels of activity. These cultures develop specific competencies—the resources necessary to support the survival and flourishing of a system. He outlines four distinct competencies in an appreciative learning culture: affirmative, expansive, generative and collaborative.

Affirmative Competency

It's easier to believe than deny. Our minds are naturally affirmative.

—John Burroughs

The affirmative competency, as defined by Barrett, means that, "The organization draws on the human capacity to appreciate positive possibilities by selectively focusing on current and past strengths, successes, and potentials" (1995, p. 40).

Affirmative competence is the capacity to focus on what the organization has done well in the past and is doing well in the present (Barrett, 1995). In nurturing affirmative competence, leaders of a high-performing organization celebrate members' achievements, directing attention to members' strengths—the source of the organization's vitality. By focusing on actual successes and deliberately ignoring hindrances and breakdowns, they hasten the very results they anticipate.

Barrett (1995) calls this dynamic "expectation loops" and points out how powerful they can be in human and organizational life. For example, in medicine, the placebo effect is very well documented. Patients often show marked biological and emotional improvements simply because they have the expectation that they are receiving helpful treatment, even if they have been given sugar pills. Similarly, in the interpersonal domain, the Pygmalion effect has shown that when teachers are led to believe that one group of students is more intelligent and capable than others, the positive expectation group outperforms the other group, even though in actuality the students are randomly distributed. The anticipation and expectation of competency

sets up a self-reinforcing loop between the teacher/manager and the student/employee as they shape one another's behavior. This same dynamic is seen in athletic training and sports psychology. In addition to having the necessary physical attributes, professional athletes may have learned to hone this affirmative competence, the capacity to project a detailed positive guiding image as if it were already true.

Barrett (1995) argues that organizations exhibit an affirmative competence on a large-system level through what strategists refer to as "strategic intent," their capacity to value their core competencies as a basis for strategic action. Traditional strategic planning models that encourage rational approaches—performing market research studies, measuring barriers to entry, considering degrees of fit between existing resources and current opportunities, focusing on ways to overcome the competitor's strengths—send a subtle, conservative message to managers to do what is feasible. High performing organizations seem to go beyond the feasibility litmus test and focus on the intangible strength associated with the organization's highest and best accomplishments. Rather than "rationally" estimating their chances of success and failure, these organizations evolve an appreciative vision anchored in their past accomplishments.

The following table (Table 1) contains some of items unpacked from Barrett for the affirmative competency (for a full list, see Appendix A):

Table 1. Items Unpacked from Barrett's Affirmative Competency

- The organization actively focuses on what's been done well in the past.
- The organization actively focuses on its current strengths.
- Members' achievements are fully identified.
- Members' strengths are fully celebrated.
- The organization's vitality is discussed, communicated, and recognized.
- You have been involved in collaboratively creating success scripts for your team or organization.
- Your unit focuses on the team's strengths and competencies.
- Your unit spends time focusing on peak experiences from the past.
- You have positive expectations for your team's performance.
- The organization has groups successful at self-monitoring.
- Stories of groups successful at self-monitoring are shared with the organization.
- There is a strategic intent to value core competencies.
- Intangible strengths are communicated.
- An appreciative vision is anchored in the organization's past accomplishments.
- Future opportunities are linked to current and past strengths and successes.

Expansive Competency

> "I can't believe THAT!" said Alice. "Can't you?" said the Queen in a pitying tone. "Try again: draw a long breath, and shut your eyes." Alice laughed. "There's no use trying," she said, "one can't believe impossible things." "I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why sometimes I believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast!"
>
> —*Through the Looking Glass*, Lewis Carroll

The expansive competency, as defined by Barrett, reveals itself when "The organization challenges habits and conventional practices, provoking members to experiment in the margins, makes expansive promises that challenge them to stretch

in new directions, and evokes a set of higher values and ideals that inspire them to passionate engagement" (1995, p. 40).

Barrett (1995) claims that when high-performing organizations create a vision that challenges members by encouraging them to go beyond familiar ways of thinking, they provoke members to stretch beyond what has seemed to be "reasonable" limits and to redefine the boundaries of what they experience as constraining. When an organization holds up a picture of what might be (the future) and puts it next to a realistic picture of what is (the present), people are naturally energized toward creative thinking. Making expansive commitments pulls people to experiment with actions they normally would not consider.

Appreciative learning cultures encourage members to make public their expansive commitments. The public nature of the commitment draws people to act in courageous ways. A famous example is President Kennedy's commitment to land a man on the moon:

> In 1960, when President Kennedy announced that the U.S. would safely land a man on the moon within ten years, many insiders thought he was crazy. They focused on the hindrances and obstacles, since NASA had not yet developed the capability to accomplish such a feat. In fact, the technology and resources did not yet exist. At this point the task seemed impossible. The vehicle could not carry the fuel necessary to propel the entire manned rocket. When a vehicle constructed of various modules that jettison after fuel expenditure was first proposed, it was not well received. Further, no one knew how to achieve a "soft" landing on the moon. A manned mother vehicle that discharged a lunar craft and then orbited the moon was such an outrageous notion that scientists literally laughed.

> But as members of the Apollo moon mission began to entertain the possibility of this "absurd" script, engineers began to think differently about old problems, such as what metals could be used and what energy systems might work. Kennedy's expansive script created a cognitive clearing, a space within which engineers were free to experiment with new ideas, rather than avoid doing the wrong things. They were able to notice potential technological breakthroughs that previously were closed off. (Barrett, 1995, p. 43)

The following table (Table 2) contains items some of items unpacked from Barrett for the expansive competency (for a full list, see Appendix A).

Table 2. Items Unpacked from Barrett's Expansive Competence

- Leadership challenges habits within the organization.
- Leadership challenges conventional practices within the organization.
- Members are provoked to think "out of the box."
- Leadership makes expansive promises that challenge members to stretch in a new direction.
- Members are provoked to stretch beyond what has seemed to be "reasonable" limits.
- Members are motivated to redefine the boundaries of what they experience as constraining.
- The organization holds a picture of what "might be" up to a realistic picture of the present.
- Members are energized towards creative thinking.
- Members are encouraged to make public their expansive commitments.
- Members feel they have the space to freely experiment with new ideas.
- Stretching beyond conventional constraints is a core value.
- Customers have been given provocative promises.
- Leadership has demonstrated a belief in members' capacity.
- The organization values possibilities.

Generative Competency

> *Patterns of action are typically intertwined with modes of discourse... thus, if we wish to change patterns of action, one significant means of doing so is through altering forms of discourse—the way events are*

> *described, explained or interpreted.... New departures in construction, new ways of putting things, new metaphors and narratives, and new forms of description and explanation are needed. In effect, we require* generative theory, *that is*, accounts of our world that challenge the taken-for-granted conventions of understanding, and simultaneously invite us into new worlds of meaning and action.
>
> —Kenneth Gergen, 1999, pp. 115–116

The *generative competency*, as defined by Barrett, is revealed when "The organization constructs integrative systems that allow members to see the consequences of their actions, to recognize that they are making a meaningful contribution, and to experience a sense of progress" (1995, p. 40).

Barrett says that appreciative learning systems exhibit a generative competency—a capacity to allow members to experience the impact of their contributions toward a larger purpose. High performing organizations foster an awareness of systems dynamics among their members. They have access to critical information on progress toward goals, critical quality issues, customers' satisfaction, and suppliers' unique demands. The organization creates partnerships that disrespect traditional boundaries so that stakeholders feel responsible for whole, identifiable tasks, and experience a shared destiny in meeting organizational goals (Barrett 1995, p. 46).

Generative competency is encouraged during many AI interventions aimed at pulling the customer into the room. This serves two purposes that reinforce the belief in the higher ideals of serving customers. First, the customer talks directly to those who

have the expertise in dealing with the product or service. Second, employees have the experience of knowing that their work is making a direct contribution; they are in direct touch with the customers actually using the products. When the employees talk to the customers, they receive immediate, unfiltered feedback (Barrett, 1995).

High-performing organizations not only develop expansive scripts that inspire members' best efforts, but they also create integrative systems that allow members to see that their efforts make a difference. The systems include elaborate and timely feedback so that members are able to sense that they are contributing to a meaningful purpose. In particular, it is important for people to experience progress, to see that their day-to-day tasks make a difference. When members experience that their efforts are contributing toward a desired goal, they are more likely to feel a sense of hope and empowerment (Barrett, 1995). Having a generative purpose can inspire some very unconventional practices:

> GE has engaged a system of "process mapping." Managers, employees from various functions and ranks, customers, and suppliers get together to map entire work processes from start to finish. This is a time-intensive procedure. It took more than one month for GE's Evandale plant to map the entire process of making turbine shafts for jet engines. The mapping has allowed the team to tackle sources of imperfect parts and arrange a more continuous flow throughout the factory. The results paid off: They achieved a 50 percent reduction in time and a $4 million drop in inventory. (Barrett, 1995, p. 44)

The following table (Table 3) contains some of items unpacked from Barrett for the generative competency (for a full list, see Appendix A).

Table 3. Items Unpacked from Barrett's Generative Competency

- Members see the consequences of their actions.
- Members recognize that they are making a meaningful contribution.
- Members are able to experience a sense of progress.
- Members realize that their day-to-day tasks make a difference.
- Members realize that their efforts are contributing toward a desired goal.
- Members have opportunities to directly interact with their customers.
- There is a sense of a "shared destiny" between your organization and its suppliers.
- New partnerships are created.
- There is collaboration with suppliers, customers, and employees.
- Members feel they participate in progress toward a larger project.
- Members experience the impact of their contribution toward a larger purpose.
- The organization fosters an awareness of system dynamics among its members.
- Members have access to critical information on progress toward goals.
- Members have access to information on critical quality issues.
- Members have access to information on customer satisfaction.

Collaborative Competency

> *Creating collaborative systems that allow for dialogue involves promoting that articulation of multiple perspectives and encouraging continuous, active debate.*
>
> —Frank J. Barrett, 1995, p. 47

The collaborative competency, as defined by Barrett, is revealed when "The organization creates forums in which members engage in ongoing dialogue and exchange diverse perspectives" (Barrett, 1995, p. 40). The collaborative competence refers to the power of dialogue to transform systems. William Isaacs (1999) writes that the purpose of dialogue is to establish a field of genuine meeting and inquiry, to create a container in which people can explore the assumptions that inform their

actions. Dialogue is an elusive but vital process that transforms its participants. The belief in the importance of dialogue reflects a sense of hope, a belief that through interaction new ideas will emerge (as cited in Barrett, 1995).

Barrett contends that appreciative learning cultures make efforts to foster dialogue, creating arenas of accessibility in which members are included in the evolution of policies and strategies, in which members can actively respond to one another. According to Ed Schein, dialogue is a "central element of any model of organizational transformation" (as cited in Barrett, 1995, p. 46).

High-performing organizations create appreciative learning cultures that ignore hierarchy and other boundaries to inclusion and involvement. They seek to deliberately create access to decision-making forums by fostering norms that legitimize the members' right to question and provoke at all levels of organizational activity. By creating systems that foster dialogue about possible actions and initiatives, high-performing organizations encourage members to think creatively, question commonly accepted definitions, and go beyond previous conceptions. By legitimizing conversations about organizational vision and direction, they allow for joint discovery (Barrett, 1995).

> Appreciative learning cultures create multiple forms of responsiveness, remain accessible and open to the emergence of new voices and perspectives, and are willing to have their thinking interrupted. They create contexts in which members have a sustained presence and are free to respectfully vocalize perspectives without restraint or fear of reprimand or censure. (Barrett, 1995, p. 46)

This is important to the collaborative competency because, responsiveness, openness and free exchange of information illustrate the power of dialogue to transform systems.

The following table (Table 4) contains some of the items unpacked from Barrett for the collaborative competency (for a full list, see Appendix A).

Table 4. Items Unpacked from Barrett's Collaborative Competency

- The organization creates forums in which members can exchange diverse perspectives.
- Members feel safe inquiring and exploring the assumptions that inform their actions.
- Leadership emphasizes dialogue across the organization.
- Leadership encourages dialogue with suppliers.
- Leadership has the belief that through interaction new ideas will emerge.
- Leadership values dialogue as a central element to organizational transformation.
- The organization deliberately creates access to decision making forums.
- Leadership legitimizes conversations about organizational vision and direction.
- Members feel that through dialogue they are part of a joint discovery.
- Leadership remains open to the emergence of new perspectives.
- Leadership is willing to have their thinking interrupted.
- Leadership promotes multiple perspectives.
- Leadership encourages continuous debate.
- Leadership is committed to fostering diversity among decision makers.
- The organization has an effective mentoring program.

Barrett developed one vision of a culture based on the principles of AI. His writing is consistent with AI principles; however, there are other dimensions of an appreciative culture that are also consistent with AI.

Two additional dimensions were added to this project. The first is the anticipatory dimension, which is revealed when *The organization inspires action by envisioning and enacting possible futures.* This dimension is consistent with the anticipatory principle of AI, the belief that to generate constructive organizational change we need focus on our collective imagination and discourse about the future. The second is the inquisitive dimension, which is revealed when *The organization learns and develops confidence by encouraging people to be curious and inquisitive, and to ask positive questions*. The inquisitive dimension is consistent with the AI principle of simultaneity in that this dimension recognizes that inquiry and change are not truly separate moments but are simultaneous. Inquiry is intervention. Therefore, I defined and created items for an anticipatory competency and an inquisitive competency.

Anticipatory Competence

The anticipatory competency has been defined as a competency in which *The organization inspires action by envisioning and enacting possible futures.* As mentioned above, people often anticipate the future by projecting images of the possible and then mobilizing the resources necessary to realize those images. This is fundamental to the creation of appreciative learning cultures.

We project our vision onto the future, and we move toward it. The image of the future must be articulated, either visually or through language, in order to be able to move toward achieving the vision or the picture. Organizations exist because of shared

conversations and projections about what the organization is, how it will function, and what it is likely to become. What we anticipate is what we find.

Cooperrider (1990) presents the case of positive imagery and its relationship to action and implications for management. By calling on findings in such areas as the placebo effect, Pygmalion dynamic, positive emotion, imbalanced inner dialogue, positive self-monitoring, and utopian imagery, he implies that the power of positive imagery has a capacity to shape reality and that a construct around affirmation is emerging.

The following table (Table 5) contains some of the items constructed within the development and definition of the anticipatory competency (for a full list, see Appendix A).

Table 5. Items Created for the Anticipatory Competency

- The organization encourages positive thinking about the future.
- Members imagine future possibilities.
- Members have positive expectations.
- Members have a clear vision of the future.
- Leadership talks about high ideals.

Inquisitive Competence

The inquisitive competency has been defined as a competency in which *The organization learns and develops confidence by encouraging people to be curious and inquisitive, and to ask positive questions.* It is also a fundamental principle of

appreciative learning cultures. As mentioned earlier, a basic assumption embedded in AI is that "human systems grow in the direction of what they most persistently, actively, and collectively ask questions about" (Ludema, 2001). In their early work, Cooperrider and Srivastva discovered that their work was more powerful when they let go of the very idea of intervening and instead re-framed their task as *inquiry*.

The methodological use of questions, not just any cluster of questions, can be said to offer inquiry. *Inquiry* as suggested by Harms (1999) is a query or pursuit into something for the purpose of a better understanding. He finds the ability to question to be the most crucial to humanity, so that humans can be properly identified as *homo interrogans*, or Inquiring Man. This leads him to an examination of the process of questioning, beginning with a phenomenological inquiry into the language related to questioning. Inquiry and questioning are closely related, but not necessarily the same. Harms proposed that inquiry is a process of controlled questioning that is conducted in a methodological and sustained search that is directed toward some definite answer or action. Questions play the central role in the inquiry process, but there is a connection or a link to how the questions are asked and formulated; namely, in such a way that the inquiry in active questioning seeks toward a specific direction.

The power of the dimension of inquisitive competence is demonstrated with the following case (Watkins & Mohr, 2001) It describes the use of AI to evaluate a training program at a transnational pharmaceutical corporation. Four "generic"

appreciative inquiry questions (peak experiences, personal values, core life-giving factors, and wishes for the future) were the ones, according to the study, that produced the richest data. The client organization consistently experienced the responses to the four questions to be the most valuable in terms of the overall goals of the evaluation.

This company approached a major change thorough a series of diagnostic exercises. Some of these were consistent with AI principles. The importance of the AI activities is that they all involved encouraging inquisition and challenging curiosity in a positive, constructive fashion. Being curious and inquisitive is embedded in AI, as well as in the inquisitive competency.

Cooperrider and Whitney (2006) emphasize the central role that questions play in the appreciative inquiry process. They offer a practice-oriented definition of *appreciative inquiry* that involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to make greater the positive potential of people and organizations. At the heart of AI is the appreciative interview that consists of positive questions.

Ludema, Cooperrider, and Barrett (2001) speak to the power of the unconditional positive question and the assumptions that are inherent in the questions. The concept of the unconditional positive question, they suggest, assumes that whatever the positive topic to be studied, it can be done unconditionally and thus influence the

course of organizations and social theory. The selection of a positive topic is a critical starting point and assumes or presupposes that there is a positive core to be tapped into by the questions. They suggest that the positive questions of AI can be used to release new vocabularies that bring about change.

The following table (Table 6) contains some of items constructed within the development and definition of the inquisitive competency (for a full list, see Appendix A).

Table 6. Items Created for the Inquisitive Competency

- Members are encouraged to be curious.
- Members are encouraged to be inquisitive.
- Members are encouraged to ask questions to build understanding.
- Members are encouraged to have more questions than answers.
- Members are encouraged to ask about what works.
- Members are encouraged to probe into current assumptions.
- Members are encouraged to use good questioning skills.

Conclusion

The introductory chapter emphasized the contextual framework and background information for how the competencies were derived and why they make an important contribution to learning cultures. This chapter specifically focused on competency definitions, supporting information, and items that were unpacked from the constructs. With these two chapters complete, we can now turn to the specific methods that were used to test the validity of the six ALC dimensions.

Chapter 3: Research Design & Methodology

> *Our overemphasis on competition makes* looking *good more important than* being *good. The resulting fear of not looking good is one of the greatest enemies of learning.*
>
> —Frank J. Barrett, 1995, p. 38

Introduction to the Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodology used to confirm Barrett's appreciative learning competencies within this dissertation study. Methods are reviewed in the following five areas: (1) Goals and Overall Approach of the Analysis, (2) Item Development, (3) Interview Administration, (4) Sample Demographics and Data Tabulation, and (5) Statistical Analysis.

Goals and Overall Approach of the Analysis

The primary goal of the analysis was to conduct a confirmatory analysis of Barrett's four competencies and the proposed six competency model. In order to do this, data collection and analysis procedures were employed that would reveal the "psychological space" of business executives around learning competencies. A common approach to representing the "psychological space" of respondents is multidimensional scaling (MDS). MDS was used to discover dimensions of psychological space and assign coordinates to the card items within that space. A second statistical procedure called hierarchical clustering analysis (HCA) was used to

help in the interpretation of the dimensional coordinates and the grouping of cards that shared similar location within the psychological space created by the MDS.

MDS (Kruskal & Wish, 1978) is used by psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, economists, market researchers, and educational researchers to "uncover the 'hidden structure' of data bases" (p. 5). For example, "educational researchers have used these methods to study the structure of intelligence, of different test batteries, and of classroom environments," (p. 6). For a description of the overall analytical approach, see Aldenderfer and Blashfield (1984); DeJordy, Borgatti, Roussin, and Halgin (2007); Kruskal and Wish (1978); and Norusis (2004, 2005).

The classic example of the utility of MDS involves the hidden structure explaining the location of cities within the United States. With this example, a distance matrix is assembled that indicates the mileage between each pair of cities. MDS analyzes this matrix and produces coordinates for each city on several dimensions. When the cities are plotted on the first two dimensions, the chart looks like a map of the United States. Each city is placed roughly where we know it should be. New York is closer to Washington DC than to Chicago. Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles are further to the left than Chicago, and so on.

Not only do the coordinates of MDS allow the researcher to look at the items that are near each other, but also to interpret the underlying dimensions as well. We know

based on our rudimentary understanding of geography that one of the dimensions of mileage distances represents latitude and the other longitude.

This same logic is used with the interpretation of projective stimuli; we not only look at the groupings of proximate items but also the underlying dimensions as well. In this case of psychological space, however, we are not limited to two or three dimensions but can interpret the multiple dimensions of psychological perception.

To relate these approaches back to learning competencies, I was trying to understand whether executives think of their organizations in terms of ALC competencies. If their mental constructs are organized in this fashion, which of the models does a better job of depicting those dimensions within the psychological space? Do the executive respondents truly group their items in the way Barrett suggests by his four competency model? Or, does the addition of the inquisitive and anticipatory dimensions (the six competency model) do a better job of explaining this space?

Although the methodology is primarily confirmatory in nature, an additional purpose for the use of MDS was to add additional insight into ALCs. Additional insight will be called for if there is not solid confirmation of either the four or six competency models. After reviewing the results of the analysis, will we find that there are new appreciative learning item groups that are important to consider? And if so, what do

these unanticipated groups tell us about appreciative learning cultures? Thus, MDS was used in both a confirmatory and exploratory manner.

Item Development

Q-sort Rationale

Q-sort techniques from psychometric testing (see Nunnally, 1967) were used to measure the psychological space of ALCs. Q-sort techniques require the respondent to sort cards, each card containing a discrete item. Our respondents sorted 61 cards, each with a separate and unique ALC item and unidentifiable code. The rationale for selecting the Q-sort technique included the following: (1) we wanted to use items as projective stimuli to uncover psychological space; (2) cards reduce interviewee fatigue and are easier to use than surveys; and (3) they minimize bias by eliminating potential sources of error, for example, scaling issues and question sequencing.

Item Construction

The initial parsing, phrasing, and item construction was completed with input solely from Barrett (1995) where he suggests that ALCs are composed of four distinct and necessary competencies. Item development began by reviewing the descriptive examples and definitions for his four competencies: appreciative, expansive, generative, and collaborative, capturing all the sentence fragments that could potentially constitute a survey item. All combinations of fragments using compound sentence structures, for example, the use of "or" or "and" were broken down into discrete and separate items. The culmination of this exercise produced 101 positively constructed items extracted directly from Barrett's work.

Because Barrett's article was written for the academic audience, a necessary next step was to take his wording and construct items with a level of comprehension suitable for a wider audience. These less theoretical items needed to carry the same meaning, yet yield higher construct validity with the respondents.

A review of the items and collaboration with an AI expert opened the door to other possibilities for examination. For example, we reached a conclusion that the whole notion of *inquiry*, a cornerstone of AI theory, might not be completely explained within Barrett's definition of "collaboration." We started to explore the relevance and power of the positive question, as well as the fundamental emphasis around "inquiry." At this point, we decided to build items specific to inquiry and to incorporate them into our data collection process to understand the outcome. This was the origin of the "inquisitive competence" defined as when *The organization learns and develops confidence by encouraging people to be curious and inquisitive, and to ask positive questions.*

The need to scrutinize and further explore "anticipation" became relevant as well. Did Barrett leave room for the importance of imagining future possibilities or having positive expectations or high ideals about the future? We decided to add a second exploratory competency, giving six in total, with this added one called the "anticipatory competency." We defined it as when *The organization inspires action by envisioning and enacting possible futures.*

In survey construction, particularly with organizational intent, positively and negatively worded questions are commonly randomized within the instrument to strengthen the reliability of the respondent's selections. There were no negative questions up to this point in the list of items; all items were positively worded. But we wondered whether negatively worded questions were critical for survey development; or, were we defeating the social constructionist premise underpinning AI? This continues to be an interesting debate. But after deliberation, we decided to generate negative items testable within each competency and to analyze their clustering effect.

The Q-sort activity that we had planned is limited to the number of items a respondent can process. Having over 60 items presents two problems: (1) we'd be asking too much from the respondents, with five planned activities per person, and (2) the software used in the multi-dimensional scaling has limitations. For these reasons, we had to reduce the number of positive items per competency, to account for the addition of negative items. Each of the six competencies had anywhere between three and eight items under the positive or negative subdivided category.

After the initial data collection on nine respondents, four items were reworded. There were items that respondents repeatedly indicated did not make sense to them. The first activity that data collection group one conducted was to take the 61 cards and split them into two piles: one pile for cards that "did not make sense" to them, and the second pile for those that "did make sense." The outcome of data collection

phase one produced a stronger item list (see Appendix B: Final Item List by Competency and Correlation) for the finalized item list used for data collection phases two and three.

Interview Administration

Overview

The survey administration was set up in three distinct phases. The main purpose of phase one was to run an initial pre-test of the items, validating that they made sense to the respondents. We were fairly certain that Barrett's theoretical expressions were too abstract for a survey that would span practitioners within organizations; however, we didn't know if our items were comprehendible enough for executives familiar with AI. The second and third phases were used with a list of items improved for better comprehension.

Data Collection

The executives were brought into one large room, each seated at his/her own table. They were all given the following: (1) a deck cards with the 61 items in randomized order; (2) a set of Post-It notes; and (3) a pen. During each of the three phases of data collection, a total of five activities were conducted. We will focus on the two activities that generated the data that was analyzed in this dissertation. A copy of the interview protocol is included in Appendix C: Respondent's Activity Handout and Appendix D: Respondent's Competency Definition Handout for those who would like to understand the full context of data collection.

The first activity focused on the respondents' comprehension of the items. They were asked to go through the whole deck and separate any items that "did not make sense" to them. Ten minutes was allocated to activity one. After completing this activity, any cards from the "did not make sense" pile were set aside and not used for any further activities. Activity one was the first exercise to deal with the validity of the ALC items—only items that were intelligible to the respondents were included in all subsequent activities.

The second activity was the Q-sort. This included the bulk of time for the data collection. Here the executives were asked to spread out the cards from the remaining pile of cards that made sense to them. They were asked to arrange the cards into four to twelve groups by placing together only those items that they felt belonged together. This provided us with a cluster of cards from the executives' perspective on how they interpreted the descriptions and, subsequently, grouped the discrete items together.

Sample Demographics and Data Tabulation

The respondents were executives from diverse organizations enrolled in graduate-level management programs at a private university. All of the respondents were familiar with AI.

The total number of respondents interviewed was 38 across all three phases. Given substantial changes to the items over the phases, only the data from the 20 respondents in the third phase were included in the analysis. Two of the 20

respondents in the final phase did not comply with the administration procedures; thus, the analyses are based on a final sample size of 18 respondents.

This sample size is sufficient for this dissertation given the directional nature of its purpose and the robustness of the clustering techniques.

Construction of the Input Matrix

The construction of the input matrix was derived from the respondents' piles of data. This followed conventional practices (see DeJordy et al., 2007; Norusis, 2004). A 61 rows by 61 columns co-occurrence matrix was completed for each of the 18 respondents analyzed. This matrix was bounded by the card item numbers on the vertical and horizontal axes. Nominal level scales indicated when two cards appeared in the same pile for each respondent. This was noted by a 1 at the intersection of those items on the matrix. When two cards did not appear in the same pile, a 0 was placed in their intersection on the matrix.

The individual matrices were combined into an aggregate matrix for the whole group. For each possible co-occurrence, a sum was calculated to show how many times the group placed those cards in the same pile. Thus, if two card items were placed together by all of the respondents, then this aggregative matrix would hold an "18" in the intersecting cell.

The co-occurrences were translated into a percentage to indicate the degree of similarity between the two items. Note that since several items were eliminated by a few respondents because they did not make sense, the base for this percentage was adjusted to account for the true number of co-occurrences. Thus, if an item was not used by 2 respondents, the percentages would be based on 16 (number of possible true occurrences) rather than 18 (number of respondents).

Each similarity percentage was subtracted from 1 to produce distance measures. This resulted in a symmetric distance matrix, which is a customary requirement of data formatting for the subsequent statistical procedures.

Statistical Analysis

Multidimensional Scaling

The MDS procedure within SPSS 16.0 (ALSCAL) was employed during this study. The SPSS MDS procedure produces between two and six dimensions for each distance matrix. Given the nominal level of the organizational data, the non-metric options were chosen to produce ordinal distance measures using squared Euclidean metrics. Although clearly the rule of parsimony comes into play—one should always use the fewest possible dimensions to capture the psychological space—two statistics are useful for guiding this decision. In this study, we used stress and RSQ for decision- making. *Stress* is a measure of error within analytical output. The larger the stress, the more error there is within the output. RSQ (equivalent to R^2) is a measure of fidelity within the analytic output. The larger the RSQ, the greater the

correspondence between the derived coordinates and the observed distances on the inputted data matrix.

There are three heuristics for using stress and RSQ. According to DeJordy et al. (2007), one wants a solution with at least .70 RSQ. Solutions with lower stress and higher RSQ are preferred over solutions with higher stress and lower RSQ. In other words, one wants to minimize stress and maximize RSQ. Since MDS will always produce dimensions that explain more RSQ with less stress, one needs to look at the additional value of each new dimension. Thus, researchers select the dimension where incremental value begins to diminish. This is referred to as the "elbow" on the chart of stress or RSQ by dimension.

Hierarchical Cluster Analysis

Hierarchical clustering was used to group together cards that share similar location within psychological space. This second statistical procedure helped in the interpretation of the dimensional coordinates and the grouping of cards within the MDS space (see Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984, as well as Norusis, 2005, for more information).

Given that psychological space may move beyond the three dimensions of physical space, using clustering was helpful in determining which cards really shared the same location within the MDS space and, hence, could be used to indicate the nature of the corresponding psychological space.

In order to complete the clustering analysis, a second data set was constructed that contained the coordinates for each card item across a series of dimensions. This is the output from the optimum MDS solution. The clustering analysis takes this output as input for the grouping together of card items with similar coordinates. Since clustering, like MDS, can produce anywhere from two clusters to the same number of clusters as cards (one card per cluster), expert judgment must be used to select the appropriate number of clusters.

Because a purpose of this analysis was confirmatory, we selected four cluster solutions and six cluster solutions. A secondary purpose of this analysis was exploratory; thus, we also expanded beyond six clusters, but we stopped at eight clusters because at nine clusters, we began to see clusters with only two items. We wanted at least three items per cluster in order to hermeneutically triangulate on the possible hidden structure.

The hierarchical clustering procedure from SPSS 16.0 was used. To match the MDS output, distances were scaled in squared Euclidean distances. Ward's method of grouping items together into clusters was used to optimize the minimum variance within each cluster (Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984). MDS and clustering allowed us to take a series of individual piles (which are relatively easy to analyze for each respondent by themselves) and to create what the aggregative structure of the piles

would look like when we analyzed the respondents as a group. This revealed the psychological space of the ALCs.

Operational Data Runs

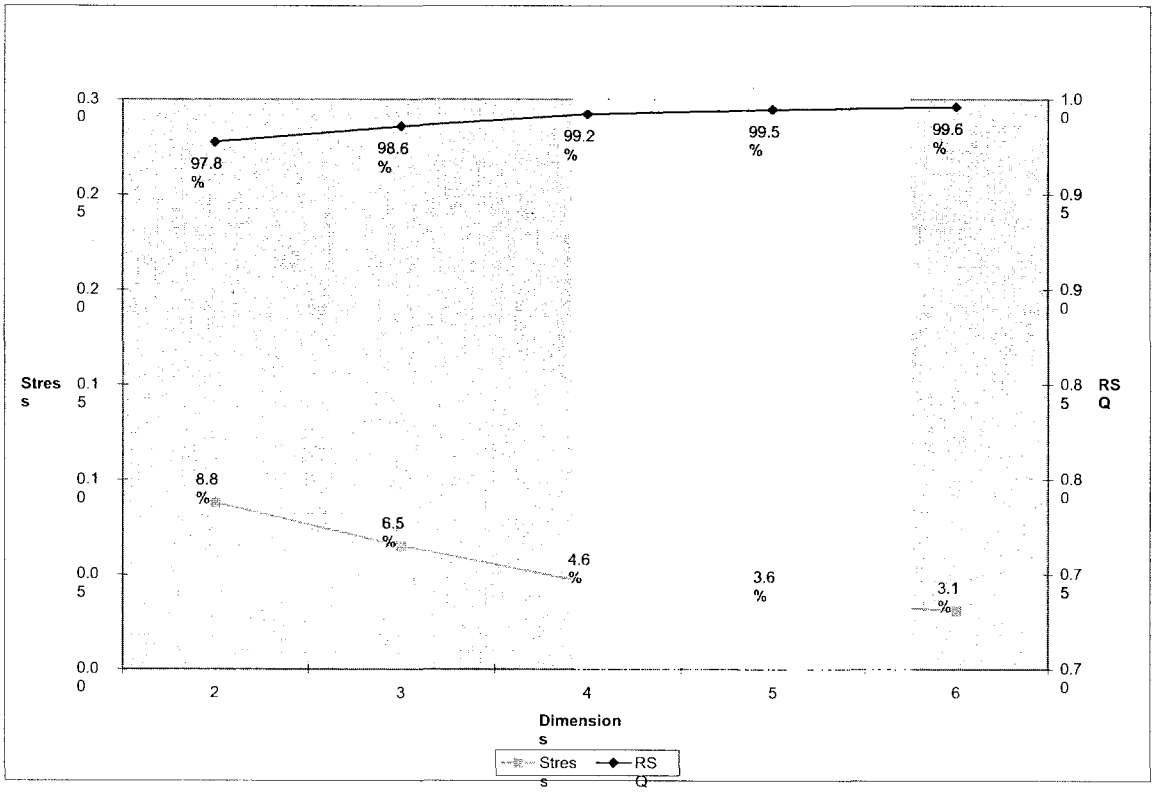
There were three runs of the data. The first run was for positively and negatively worded items; the second run was for the positively worded items only; and the third run was for the negatively worded items only.

Each run involved compiling the aggregative distance matrix, running MDS, determining the number of dimensions, creating the dimension/coordinate data set, running clustering, and interpreting the clusters.

We will focus the bulk of this section on the analysis of the positive items, with some discussion of the first run covering positive and negative items. A best view of the analysis and results—provocative, as opposed to definitive answers—is offered. This requires expert interpretation, which will be demonstrated herein.

Procedures and Decisions for Analysis of Positively and Negatively Worded Items

Data included all positive and negative card items, 61 in total, with 18 total respondents. Four dimensions were the optimum representation of the psychological space. See Figure 2.



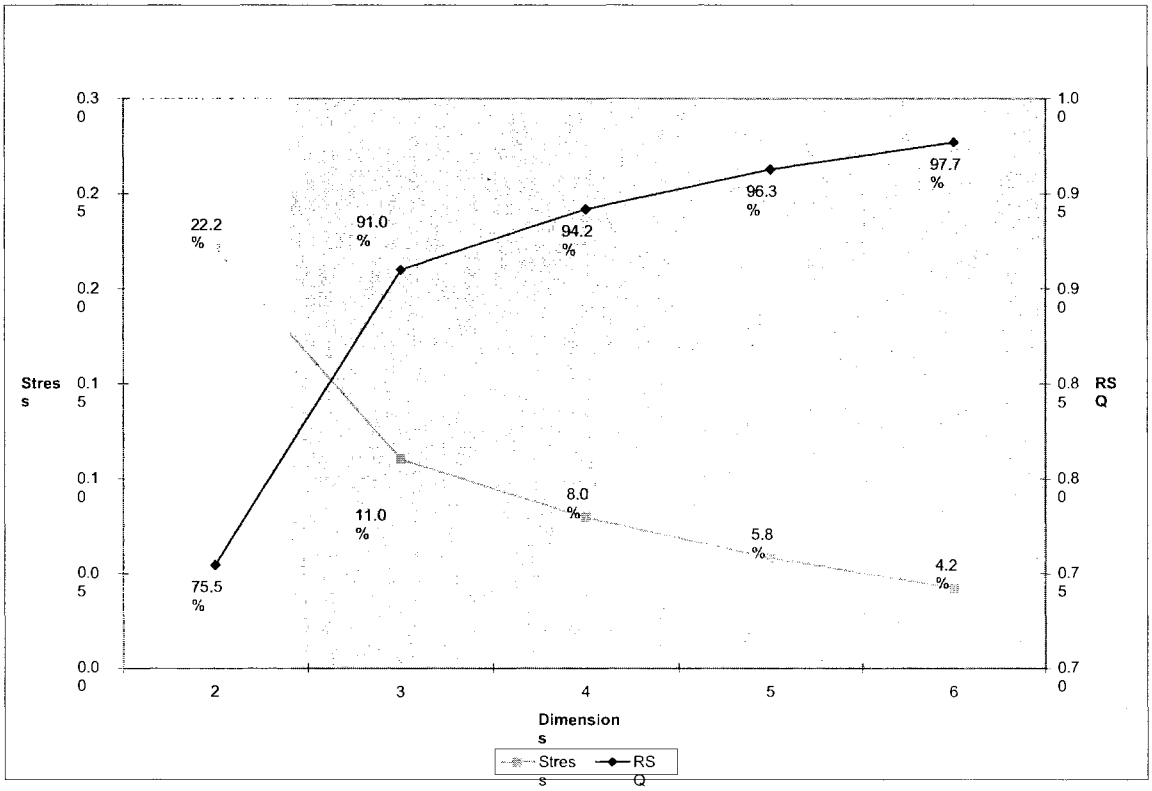
Note: 4 dimensions retained for clustering

Figure 2. Stress and RSQ of MDS Solution for Positive and Negative ALC Survey Items

The RSQ for four dimensions is 99.2%, which is almost perfect. Stress for four dimensions is 4.6%, a 2% improvement over three dimensions (6.5%) but only a 1% degradation from five dimensions (3.6%). Note that four dimensions were retained and inputted into the confirmatory cluster analysis that produced the four- and six-cluster solutions. As will be discussed in the Results chapter, a two-cluster solution was also run.

Procedures and Decisions for Analysis of Positively Worded Items

The data included only the positive card items, 34 cards in total. This included the 19 respondents. Six dimensions were the optimum representation of the psychological space. The RSQ for six dimensions is 97.8%, almost perfect. The stress for six dimensions is 4.2%, a 1.6% improvement over five dimensions (5.8%). Note that while the three-dimension solution has merit given the clear "elbow" in the stress figures, this stress level is not comparable to that within the first run. In order to compare the results of both runs, a similar level of stress and RSQ was deemed important. (See Figure 3.) Note: Six dimensions were retained and inputted into the confirmatory cluster analyses that produced the four-cluster and a six-cluster solution. As will be discussed in the Results chapter, seven- and eight-cluster solutions were also run.



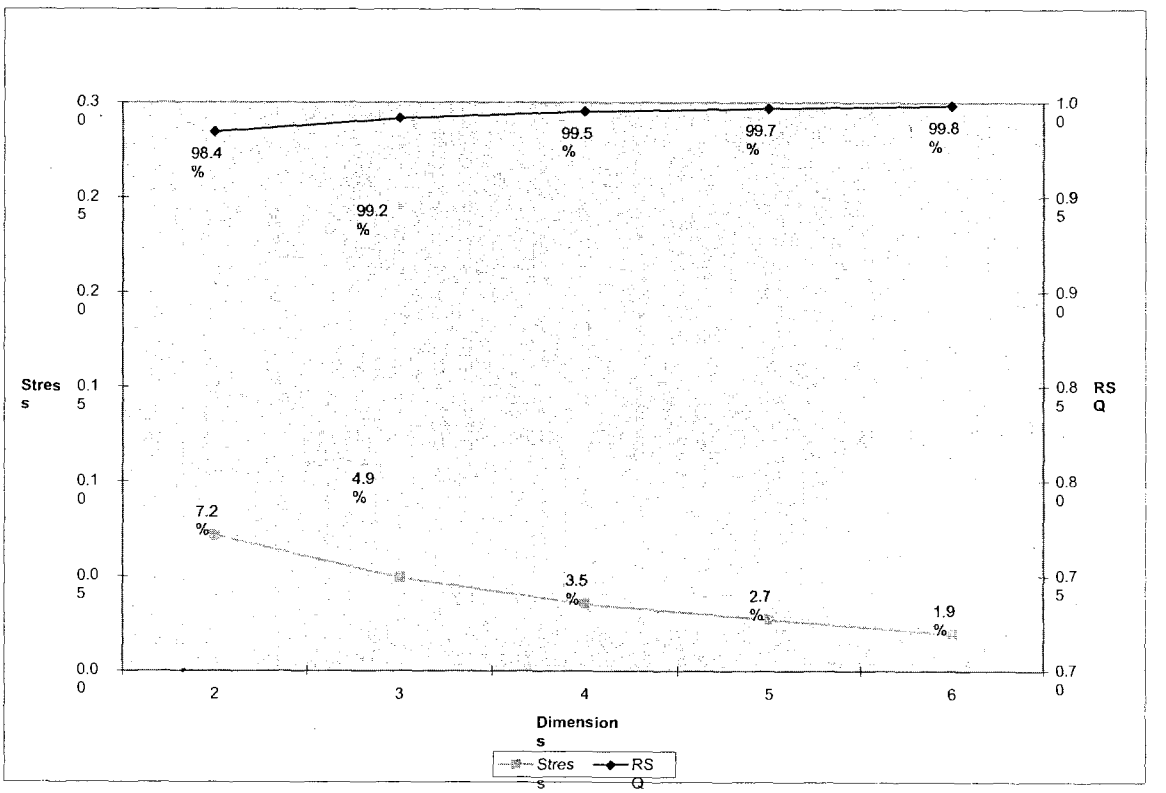
Note: 6 dimensions retained for clustering

Figure 3. Stress and RSQ of MDS Solution for Positive ALC Survey Items

Procedures and Decisions for Analysis of Negatively Worded Items

The data included only the negative card items, 27 cards in total. This included the 19 respondents. Three dimensions were the optimum representation of the psychological space. The RSQ for three dimensions is 99.2%, almost perfect. The stress for three dimensions is 4.6%, a 2.3% improvement over two dimensions (7.2%). Note that while the four-dimension solution has merit given the clear "elbow" in the stress figures, this stress level is not comparable to that within the first two runs. In order to compare the results of all three runs, a similar level of stress and RSQ was deemed

important. (See Figure 4 below.) Note: Three dimensions were retained and inputted into the confirmatory cluster analyses that produced the four-cluster and a six-cluster solution. These solution sets will be discussed in the Results chapter.



Note: 3 dimensions retained for clustering

Figure 4. Stress and RSQ of MDS Solution for Negative ALC Survey Items

Conclusion

This chapter outlines the methodology, research design and statistical procedures used to confirm Barrett's four competencies and the proposed six-competency model. As noted in this document, the purpose of this research was to explore the validity of the six ALC dimensions. Because of this purpose, the aforementioned techniques are

appropriate, and the resulting analyses, based on the 18 respondents, will be useful for providing insight into the ALC dimensions.

Chapter 4: Results

The best thing about dreams is that fleeting moment when you are between asleep and awake, when you don't know the difference between reality and fantasy, when for just that one moment you feel with your entire soul that the dream is reality, and it really happened.

—Anonymous

Introduction

This section presents the analytic results that are most relevant for the confirmatory analysis of the a priori ALC competencies. The results of the analysis are presented in four sections: (1) a Summary of Overall Results, (2) Results of Four-Cluster Solution for Positive ALC Survey Competency Items, (3) Results of Six-Cluster Solution for Positive ALC Survey Competency Items, and (4) Results of Two-Cluster Solution for Positive and Negative ALC Survey Competency Items.

Summary of Overall Results

In summary, the results are both reliable and valid. The stress and RSQ levels from the MDS procedures clearly show that the resulting dimensions/coordinates accurately represent the pile sorts of the respondents as an aggregate group. Statistical conclusion validity (Cook & Campbell, 1979) of the procedures is evidenced by these stress and RSQ levels. The clear interpretability of the clusters demonstrates that these procedures are meaningful as well. The data and resulting analyses are of a quality sufficient for inquiry into ALCs, for publication of the conclusions of that inquiry, and for further development of ALC measurement.

Results of Four-Cluster Solution for Positive ALC Survey Competency Items

If Barrett had been completely right, his four competency definitions would have completely grouped together. But, as we can see from Table 7, this is not the case. Some of his competencies do look strong; however, there is still some level of noise in each of them. The results of each of the six competencies are explained after Table 7.

Table 7. Four-Cluster Solution for Positive ALC Survey Competency Items

Competence	Code	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4
		10 items	14 items	5 items	5 items
Affirmative Competence					
Positively Worded					
Learn from past successes	PAC 1	X			
Discuss current strengths	PAC 2		X		
Share stories about successes	PAC 3		X		
Commit resources to personal development	PAC 4	X			
Use your strengths and interests at work	PAC 5	X			
Expansive Competence					
Positively Worded					
Think out of the box	PPC 12			X	
Innovate and experiment	PPC 13			X	
Pursue new ideas and opportunities	PPC 14			X	
Challenge conventional practices	PPC 15			X	
Aspire to greatness	PPC 16				X
Generative Competence					
Positively Worded					
Have the feeling that they are making a meaningful contribution	PGC 24	X			
Understand how their job contributes to the greater whole	PGC 25	X			
Shape the future	PGC 26				X
Continuously learn	PGC 27		X		
Have access to information for doing their job well	PGC 28	X			
Translate values into action	PGC 29		X		
See the consequences of their actions	PGC 30	X			
Experience a sense of progress	PGC 31	X			
Collaborative Competence					
Positively Worded					
Share best practices	PCC 35		X		
Engage in constructive dialog	PCC 36		X		
Build positive working relationships	PCC 37		X		
Support the work of others	PCC 38		X		
Consider the whole system in making decisions	PCC 39	X			
Anticipatory Competence					
Positively Worded					
Encourage positive thinking about the future	PANC 44				X
Imagine future possibilities	PANC 45				X
Have positive expectations	PANC 46	X			
Have a clear vision of the future	PANC 47				X
Talk about high ideals	PANC 48		X		
Inquisitive Competence					
Positively Worded					
Be curious and inquisitive	PIC 52			X	
Ask questions to build understanding	PIC 53		X		
Have more questions than answers	PIC 54		X		
Ask about what works	PIC 55		X		
Probe into current assumptions	PIC 56		X		
Use good questioning skills	PIC 57		X		

Affirmative Competency: Four-Cluster Results

The affirmative competency had considerable noise, with only three of the five items grouping together. The other two—*Discuss current strengths* and *Share stories about successes*—fell within the collaborative/inquiry clustering. If the exploratory competency of inquiry were not included, it would raise the question of whether the affirmative competency would have had a tighter clustering. The action words of *Discuss* and *Share* are certainly collaborative actions; however, the *strengths* and *successes* elements of the items should characterize an affirmative nature. We can conclude that these executives are more inclined to group these items based on the initial action word and not on the overall intent of the items' affirmative structure. This suggests that we may need to rewrite the items to have consistent, collaborative verbs and affirmative intent.

Expansive Competency: Four-Cluster Interpretation

The strongest clustering is within the expansive competence. Here four out of five items clustered, with the exception of *Aspire to greatness*. This item clustered within the anticipatory grouping. The definition of the anticipatory competency is that, *The organization inspires action by envisioning and enacting possible futures*, as developed for this study. Barrett would contend that anticipatory is accounted for within the expansive competency. However, on the contrary, it had a fairly strong grouping of three of the five items clustering together within cluster four. None of the anticipatory items fell within Barrett's expansive competency. Also, as mentioned in the Methods chapter, we needed to reword many of the items for executive comprehension. This item was considerably reworded; Barrett does not suggest the

word *great* or use the word *greatness* within his description or examples of the expansive competency.

Generative Competency: Four-Cluster Results

The generative competency is also noisy. Five out of eight items grouped together in cluster one, which is fairly significant; however, the generative competency also grouped with three out of the five affirmative items—one from collaborative and one from anticipatory. The collaborative item that fell within cluster one is *Consider the whole system in making decisions*. The word *whole* should have been reworded, since it is also used within the generative item, *Understand how their job contributes to the greater whole*. Both items use the word *whole*. Here, the concept of *wholeness* has created a cluster effect. The two generative items that did not fall into cluster one—*Continuously learn* and *Translate values into action*—both fell within cluster two, the collaborative/inquiry clustering. Respondents must feel that both of these activities, continuous learning and translating values, require collaboration, or that they are collaborative in nature.

Collaborative Competency: Four-Cluster Results

Similar to the expansive competency, the collaborative competency also clustered very strongly. Here four out of five items clustered, with the exception of *Consider the whole system in making decisions*. This fell within the generative clustering. Construction of the item did not include a strong collaborative element other than *whole system*. Respondents could have interpreted *Consider the whole system in making decisions* as part of shaping the future and the construction of integrative

systems, as included in Barrett's definition. The only other extraneous item that also fell into cluster three was one of the inquisitive items, *Be curious and inquisitive.* The nature of the expansive competency requires "out of the box" thinking, a challenge to conventional practices and experimentation in the margins. Certainly, the *Be curious* part of this compound item is more grounded in expansive thinking than is the definition of the inquisitive competency.

Anticipatory Competency: Four-Cluster Results

The anticipatory competency did fairly well in its first exploratory test, with three out of five items clustering together. The other good characteristic is that only two other items grouped with it in cluster four. The two items that did not cluster were *Have positive expectations* and *Talk about high ideals*. The item *Have positive expectations* fell in cluster one, with the majority of the generative and affirmative items. I can understand why this clustered with the affirmative items more than with the generative items because the affirmative competency focuses on appreciating positive possibilities. *Talk about high ideals* starts with *Talk.* Talking is very often considered an element in collaboration; hence, this item fell into cluster two. The other two items that fell into cluster four are *Aspire to greatness* and *Shape the future*. Respondents must consider the act of "aspiring" to be more of anticipatory trait than an expansive one. *Shape the future* is explainable in that all items using the word *future* clustered together: *Encourage positive thinking about the future*, *Have a clear vision of the future,* and *Shape the future*.

Inquiry Competency: Four-Cluster Results

The inquiry competency, as Barrett would suggest, was tightly grouped with the collaborative competency. Here, five out of six items grouped in the collaborative clustering. The only item that did not cluster was *Be curious and inquisitive*. This item fell into the expansive competency, which is clearly explainable. One must be curious to pursue new ideas, innovate and experiment, and think out of the box, as outlined within Barrett's expansive definition.

Results of Six-Cluster Solution for Positive ALC Survey Competency Items

If the newly introduced anticipatory and inquisitive competencies would have been valid, they would have completely grouped together. But, as can be seen in Table 8, which shows the six-cluster solution data, this is not the case. These competencies do have some significant findings, which will be reviewed in the discussion and interpretation chapter; however, there is significant noise in the cluster solution. The results of each of the six competencies are discussed after Table 8.

Table 8. Six-Cluster Solution for Positive ALC Survey Competency Items

Competence	Code	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5	Cluster 6
Affirmative Competence		4 items	9 items	5 items	6 items	5 items	5 items
Positively Worded							
Learn from past successes	PAC 1	X					
Discuss current strengths	PAC 2		X				
Share stories about successes	PAC 3			X			
Commit resources to personal development	PAC 4	X					
Use your strengths and interests at work	PAC 5				X		
Expansive Competence							
Positively Worded							
Think out of the box	PPC 12					X	
Innovate and experiment	PPC 13					X	
Pursue new ideas and opportunities	PPC 14					X	
Challenge conventional practices	PPC 15					X	
Aspire to greatness	PPC 16						X
Generative Competence							
Positively Worded							
Have the feeling that they are making a meaningful contribution	PGC 24				X		
Understand how their job contributes to the greater whole	PGC 25				X		
Shape the future	PGC 26						X
Continuously learn	PGC 27		X				
Have access to information for doing their job well	PGC 28				X		
Translate values into action	PGC 29			X			
See the consequences of their actions	PGC 30	X					
Experience a sense of progress	PGC 31	X					
Collaborative Competence							
Positively Worded							
Share best practices	PCC 35			X			
Engage in constructive dialog	PCC 36		X				
Build positive working relationships	PCC 37		X				
Support the work of others	PCC 38		X				
Consider the whole system in making decisions	PCC 39				X		
Anticipatory Competence (New)							
Positively Worded							
Encourage positive thinking about the future	PANC 44						X
Imagine future possibilities	PANC 45						X
Have positive expectations	PANC 46				X		
Have a clear vision of the future	PANC 47						X
Talk about high ideals	PANC 48			X			
Inquiry Competence (New)							
Positively Worded							
Be curious and inquisitive	PIC 52					X	
Ask questions to build understanding	PIC 53		X				
Have more questions than answers	PIC 54		X				
Ask about what works	PIC 55		X				
Probe into current assumptions	PIC 56			X			
Use good questioning skills	PIC 57		X				

Affirmative Competency: Six-Cluster Results

The affirmative competency lost considerable clustering as we expanded to the six-cluster solution. The five items are spread across four separate clusters. The two that did group together in cluster one—*Learn from past successes* and *Commit resources to person development*—clustered with two of the generative items: *See the consequences of their actions* and *Experience a sense of progress.*

Expansive Competency: Six-Cluster Results

The strongest clustering remains within the expansive competence. Even out to six clusters, four out of five items remained together. The only exception is *Aspire to greatness*. This item clearly resembles items from the anticipatory competency, like *Talk about high ideals* and *Have positive expectations*. The other item that fell into cluster five is *Be curious and inquisitive.* As mentioned in the four-cluster solution set, this is a compound item and it's clear that being curious is part of the expansive description.

Generative Competency: Six-Cluster Results

The generative competency also lost considerable clustering as we expanded to the six-cluster solution. The eight items are spread across five separate clusters. Three items do group together in cluster four: *Have the feeling that they are making a meaningful contribution*, *Understand how their job contribution to the greater whole,* and *Have access to information for doing their job well.* However, these three items also grouped with *Use your strengths and interests at work* from the affirmative

competency, *Consider the whole system in making decisions* from the collaborative competency, and *Have positive expectations* from the anticipatory competency.

Collaborative and Inquiry Competencies: Six-Cluster Results

There remains a tight association with the collaborative competency and inquiry competency. With eleven items between the two competencies, seven of them cluster together. We've already concluded that *Be curious and inquisitive* can easily be characteristic of the expansive competency. It also grouped with expansive going out to the six-cluster solution. The other three items—*Consider the whole system in making decisions*, *Talk about high ideals*, and *Probe into current assumptions*—fall under cluster three.

Anticipatory Competency: Six-Cluster Results

The anticipatory competency had three out of the five items group together in cluster six. One of the generative items also fell into cluster six, *Shape the future.* This seems to make sense in that other anticipatory items like *Imagine future possibilities* and *Have a clear vision of the future* are closely associated with *Shape the future.* Also, as mentioned in the four-cluster solution, the aspiration from *Aspire to greatness* must be interpreted as having an anticipatory quality. *Talk about high ideals* begins with a collaborative action word. Talking is often considered an element in collaboration; hence, this item clustered with the collaborative items, as in the four-cluster solution. The item *Have positive expectations* continues to group with the majority of the affirmative and generative items. Again, this can be understood: It clustered with the

affirmative items more than with the generative items because the affirmative competency focuses on appreciating positive possibilities.

Inquiry Competency: Six-Cluster Results

The inquiry competency remained consistent with the four-competency solution set, staying tightly grouped with the collaborative competency. Again, five out of six items grouped in the collaborative clustering. The only item that did not cluster was *Be curious and inquisitive*. This item, as in the four-cluster solution, fell in the expansive competency, with the same explanation. That is, one must be curious to pursue new ideas, innovate and experiment, and think out of the box, as described in the expansive definition.

Results of the Two-Cluster Solution for Positive and Negative ALC Survey Competency Items

The cleanest solution set can be extracted from Table 9, the two-cluster analysis with positively and negatively worded items. From the 61 items, we have 34 positively worded items and 26 negatively worded items. All 34 positively worded items (or 100%) fell into cluster one. Of the 26 negatively worded items, 19 (or 73%) dropped into cluster two. The next chapter discusses the usage of positively constructed items combined with negatively constructed items in assessing an appreciative learning culture.

Table 9. Two-Cluster Solution for Positive and Negative ALC Survey Competency Items

Competence	Code	Cluster 1	Cluster 2
		42 items	19 items
Affirmative Competence			
Positively Worded			
Learn from past successes	PAC 1	X	
Discuss current strengths	PAC 2	X	
Share stories about successes	PAC 3	X	
Commit resources to personal development	PAC 4	X	
Use your strengths and interests at work	PAC 5	X	
Negatively Worded			
Rationalize all analysis	NAC 6		X
Leave history in the past	NAC 7	X	
Seek out root causes for failure	NAC 8		X
Investigate blame	NAC 9		X
Communicate weaknesses	NAC 10		X
Place a person in the job that they currently do best	NAC 11	X	
Expansive Competence			
Positively Worded			
Think out of the box	PPC 12	X	
Innovate and experiment	PPC 13	X	
Pursue new ideas and opportunities	PPC 14	X	
Challenge conventional practices	PPC 15	X	
Aspire to greatness	PPC 16	X	
Negatively Worded			
Punish failure	NPC 17		X
Address only problems that are familiar	NPC 18		X
Focus on issues with an imaginable solution	NPC 19	X	
Point out flaws	NPC 20		X
Oppose new ideas	NPC 21		X
Take few chances	NPC 22		X
Avoid confrontations	NPC 23		X
Generative Competence			
Positively Worded			
Have the feeling that they are making a meaningful contribution	PGC 24	X	
Understand how their job contributes to the greater whole	PGC 25	X	
Shape the future	PGC 26	X	
Continuously learn	PGC 27	X	
Have access to information for doing their job well	PGC 28	X	
Translate values into action	PGC 29	X	
See the consequences of their actions	PGC 30	X	
Experience a sense of progress	PGC 31	X	
Negatively Worded			
Focus on immediate tasks	NGC 32	X	
Stay distant from customers	NGC 33		X
Do your job and leave the mission to us	NGC 34		X
Collaborative Competence			
Positively Worded			
Share best practices	PCC 35	X	
Engage in constructive dialog	PCC 36	X	
Build positive working relationships	PCC 37	X	
Support the work of others	PCC 38	X	
Consider the whole system in making decisions	PCC 39	X	
Negatively Worded			
Delivers monologues then withdraws into invulnerable space	NCC 40		X
Communicate within a rigid hierarchy	NCC 41		X

Consider the risk associated when speaking out about suggestions	NCC 42		X
Shelter knowledge, due to its power	NCC 43		X
Anticipatory Competence (New)			
Positively Worded			
Encourage positive thinking about the future	PANC 44	X	
Imagine future possibilities	PANC 45	X	
Have positive expectations	PANC 46	X	
Have a clear vision of the future	PANC 47	X	
Talk about high ideals	PANC 48	X	
Negatively Worded			
Work on what makes sense today	NANC 49	X	
Dialog about current issues	NANC 50	X	
Be practical about the future	NANC 51	X	
Inquiry Competence (New)			
Positively Worded			
Be curious and inquisitive	PIC 52	X	
Ask questions to build understanding	PIC 53	X	
Have more questions than answers	PIC 54	X	
Ask about what works	PIC 55	X	
Probe into current assumptions	PIC 56	X	
Use good questioning skills	PIC 57	X	
Negatively Worded			
Accept that things are done this way for a reason	NIC 58		X
Ask questions if they are good	NIC 59		X
Limit curiosity because it can be distracting	NIC 60		X
Believe that we do things best	NIC 61	X	

The five items that did not enable 100% perfect groupings of the negatively worded items included the following: *Leave history in the past*, *Place a person in the job that they currently do best*, *Focus on issues with an imaginable solution*, *Focus on immediate tasks,* and *Believe that we do things best.* An explanation of each follows:

Leave history in the past was intended to negatively correlate with *Learn from past successes,* which is a positive item under the affirmative competency. The respondents' decision-making here might have been to leave certain aspects of history in the past. This study also had a projective element to it in that the executives were applying the items to their organization. For example, the concept of leaving history in the past might be deemed good if the executive was referring to the negative

aspects of their individual interpretation of history within their organization. These could include blaming, causes of failure, communication, and confrontational issues.

Place a person in the job that they currently do best was intended to negatively correlate with *Commit resources to personal development* and *Use your strengths and interests at work*. The executives' decision-making here might have been on the use of *best* as an admirable quality, deemphasizing *current* as the status quo and lack of personal growth.

Focus on issues with an imaginable solution was an exploratory item, one not suggested by Barrett. The intention was to negatively dispose the definition of the expansive competency, *The organization challenges habits and conventional practices, provoking members to experiment in the margins, makes expansive promises that challenge them to stretch in new directions, and evokes a set of higher values and ideals that inspire them to passionate engagement*. Negative items will be thrown out of further research; however, this item does seem to focus on the future and expansion with emphasis on imagining solutions. It was not constructed well from a negative perspective.

Focus on immediate tasks was intended to negatively cluster with the generative competency. From a respondent's perspective, focusing on immediate tasks is part of

everyday life. The nature, quality, or generative suggestion of those tasks was not articulated during the negative construction of this item.

Believe that we do things best was intended to negatively impact the inquiry competency. The competency was defined as, *The organization learns and develops confidence by encouraging people to be curious and inquisitive, and to ask positive questions*. Without further exploration, the only explanation as to why this item clustered positively is that confidence and the belief in one's self is normally an admirable and positive quality, associated with personal mastery.

Overall, these five negatively worded items that did not group are insignificant to the overall findings of the asymmetrical nature between positively and negatively worded questions. Additionally, based on the analysis of results for the five items that fell into cluster one, one can conclude that the polarization between positive and negative items could have been even stronger.

Conclusion

Overall, the results are reliable, valid, and sufficient to provide further insight into the ALCs. The stress and RSG levels from the MDS procedures clearly show that the resulting dimensions/coordinates accurately represent the pile sorts of the respondents as an aggregate group. Statistical conclusion validity (Cook & Campbell, 1979) of the procedures is evidenced by these figures. The clear interpretability of the clusters demonstrates that these procedures are meaningful as well. The data and resulting

analyses are of a quality sufficient for inquiry into ALCs, for publication of the conclusions of that inquiry, and for further development of ALC measurement. Statistical validity is evidenced by the analysis and the supporting tables and figures.

Chapter 5: Discussion & Interpretation

Appreciative learning cultures nurture innovative learning by fostering an affirmative focus, expansive thinking, a generative sense of meaning, and creating collaborative systems.

—Frank J. Barrett, 1995

Summary of Overall Conclusions

Four key findings emerged out of this analysis of appreciative learning cultures. One is that executives strongly associate the items representing Barrett's definition of an expansive competence. This means that having an organization that pursues new ideas and that promotes innovation and experiment is foundational for expansion in today's marketplace.

Second, executives strongly associate the items representing Barrett's definition of a collaborative competence. Sharing practices with constructive dialog and positive relationships with a democratic decision-making process is fundamental to growth and generative learning.

Third, executives do not completely associate Barrett's affirmative and generative competencies. Since one of the future outcomes is to create an assessment that is understood by organizational members for diagnostic purposes, we need to revise

either how we think about these constructs or how we're portraying them to the respondents. In either case, these constructs call for further exploration.

Fourth, executives do not link positively and negatively worded items within their intended constructs. This finding offers us insight into the potential limitations of traditional survey methods when it comes to measuring appreciative dynamics in organizations. This suggests that to measure the presence of a positive aspect of culture with a negative indicator may be invalid. This lends support to a fundamental premise of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Ludema et al., 2001) that appreciative inquiry and problem solving are two distinct modes of being. Problem solving may be effective for making something negative go away, but it is ineffective for bringing something new into being. The implications of these findings for research and practice are elaborated.

The confirmatory approach employed in this project was designed to reveal the "psychological space" of appreciative learning culture (ALC) from the perspective of real-world organizational executives. The intent of this work was twofold: (1) to assess the validity of a priori conceptions of ALC competencies, and (2) to develop a solid platform that can lead to data-driven revisions to a second round of beta tests on an ALC instrument. As such, the results of such a process create only the beginnings of work in a domain, and there are many opportunities for additional work. The next chapter discusses (1) implications for further research, recommending methodological and survey construction considerations, and (2) implications for practice.

Conclusion One: A Foundation of an ALC Is the Expansive Competency

As mentioned in the literature review, classic approaches to problem solving leverage the same mind-set that people used to create them; therefore, they rarely create innovative possibilities. Instead, they simply learn to cope within existing constraints. The expansive competency is the cornerstone for fostering an appreciative learning culture.

The first conclusion confirms Barrett's theory of an expansive competency. As evidenced in the results, there is strong alignment between the expansive definition and related items, *The organization challenges habits and conventional practices, provoking members to experiment in the margins, makes expansive promises that challenge them to stretch in new directions, and evokes a set of higher values and ideals that inspire them to passionate engagement.*

Since executives relate very well to the construct of an expansive competency, we need to examine what we are doing to capitalize on the conceptual grounding and organizational importance of this competency. Since organizational change and the constant need for innovation continues to demand accelerated attention, executives should identify with the need to seek the underlying strengths and pockets of energy and moments where an expansive system is operating at its peak. Are we doing our best at facilitating expansionary scripts to envision what the system would look like when operating at its greatest potential?

Organizational leadership requires constant challenge to current habits and conventional practices embedded within its social architecture. Leaders must make the expansive commitments that Barrett suggests to challenge members to stretch in new directions. The notion of going beyond familiar ways of thinking should be incorporated within the organizational vision and emphasized as a core value.

Organizational members must also be energized toward creative thinking and have a safe harbor for doing so, fundamental to any learning organization. How are we placing value on original ideas and the creation of new possibilities? Leadership needs to find ways of recognizing, rewarding, and sharing the stories when innovation is at its finest moment. Members also need to be encouraged to publicly declare their expansive commitments.

Conclusion Two: A Second Foundation of an ALC Is the Collaborative Competency

Another problem with problem solving, as Barrett (1995) contends, is that it can destroy cooperation and fragment relationships. If something is broken, it must be someone's fault. People become invested in fixing blame and defending their positions. This often leads to excessive competition, a serious impediment to learning. The collaborative competency is also fundamental to nurturing an appreciative learning culture.

The second conclusion confirms Barrett's theory of a collaborative competency in that there appears to be strong clustering with the collaborative definition and related items, *The organization creates forums in which members engage in ongoing dialogue and exchange diverse perspectives*. The conclusion also disproves my exploratory research that inquiry has a psychological space independent of the other five competencies, bound within the definition, *The organization learns and develops confidence by encouraging people to be curious and inquisitive, and to ask positive questions*. A collaborative competency is also fundamental to an organization seeking an appreciative learning culture.

The notion of a collaborative competency is a powerful insight. CEOs on down discuss the need for increased collaboration. However, do organizations have any objective indicator that they're getting any better or worse at collaborating? Barrett takes this down to one of Maslow's primary needs (Maslow, 1943), the need for safety and security. According to Maslow, lower level needs, like needing to feel safe, must be fulfilled before moving up the pyramid to higher level needs related to belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. Barrett specifically mentions that members must feel safe inquiring about and exploring the assumptions that inform their actions. Organizations thus need to ask themselves, "Do our members spend excessive energy calculating the risk associated with speaking out about their suggestions?"

Tying collaboration back to the expansive competency, does leadership have the belief that through interaction new ideas will emerge? The encouragement of dialog across the organization as well as with suppliers and customers should foster innovative thinking. The collaborative efforts also need to span organizational boundaries; and, leadership should be aware that distinctions of titles, roles, and benefits often block participation and involvement. According to Barrett, there actually needs to be a "disrespect," in some fashion, for organizational hierarchy and other boundaries to inclusion and involvement.

There is increased attention to organizational diversity. Is leadership fully committed to fostering diversity in the decision-making process, and do they truly promote reaching out for multiple perspectives while doing so? Leaders need to understand that seeking alternative views could interrupt their thinking and decisiveness. Are they willing to encourage diversity as another form of continuous debate?

Conclusion Three: The Affirmative and Generative Competencies Are Not Yet Foundations of an ALC

Clearly, both the affirmative and generative competencies call for further exploration of either (1) the overall operational definitions of the existing boundaries between these two competencies, (2) the relationship between the competencies, or (3) the items and construction of the items used to express these competencies within this test.

We can conclude that Barrett's definitions of the affirmative and generative competencies are not clearly understood by executives based on the results in cluster solutions four and six. This supposition does not imply that appreciative learning systems do not require generative learning or that generative learning doesn't involve an appreciative approach, only that the executives clearly do not psychologically group these items by their intended definitions by the item representation.

As shown in the four-cluster solution, the majority of the affirmative and generative items cluster together in cluster one. One scenario is that learning from past successes, discussing current strengths, and using strengths and interests at work (all from the affirmative competency) might allow executives to feel like they are making a meaningful contribution (generative competency). Making a meaningful contribution (generative competency) cycles back to continued success (affirmative competency); and success allows for continually experiencing a sense of progress (generative competency). This is one example of the intertwined possibilities between the affirmative and generative competencies.

Another plausible explanation, based on our items, revolves around the notion of committing resources to personal development. If I committed resources to others' own personal development (affirmative competency), I'd have a feeling that I was making a meaningful contribution (generative competency), and I'd also have a better feeling about how my job contributes to the greater whole (generative competency).

Barrett's generative definition can be expanded to include individual workers being able to see their part in the whole organization and how the whole organization is in their part of it. So, the generative capacity might mean more than to see the consequences of their actions, recognize that they are making a meaningful contribution, and experiencing a sense of progress. It could include the individual's capacity to see their job function, or potential, within the whole.

Another expansion of this definition of generative capacity should include agency theory (Hatch, 2006), for implicit in the definition is also a sense of the individual's agency being unleashed. Here, they see themselves actually putting into action the lessons of the learning. *Continuously learn* is certainly part of the theory; however, if the individual cannot anticipate putting the learning into action, the whole construct of a learning culture is defeated.

Since organizations consider roughly 70% of personal development to be on-the-job training, this requires access to the right people within the growth areas, as well as information about those areas. Committing resources to personal development (affirmative competency) clusters with the need to access information for doing their job well (generative competency).

Do executives really think affirmation is a construct connected to future potential? The anticipatory competence has a projective element geared toward future thinking.

It has three of the five items grouping together, with little noise. The two other items that grouped with the anticipatory competency should probably be part of this competency: *Shape the future* from the generative competency is certainly more tied to the anticipatory construct; and *Aspire to greatness* from the expansive competency should also be part of the anticipatory definition.

Conclusion Four: ALCs Cannot Be Built by Fixing Problems

One cannot build a positive learning culture by fixing problems with the current learning culture. The first thing executives do is to separate positive from negative, ignoring the confirmatory competencies we were out to prove. As interpreted from the two-cluster solution, the appreciative inquiry approach is confirmed in that a survey developed to assess ALCs could not group positive and negative items. This lends support to a fundamental premise of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Ludema et al., 2001): that appreciative inquiry and problem-solving are two distinct modes of being. Problem solving may be effective for making something negative go away, but it is ineffective for bringing something new into being.

The grouping of positive and negative items represents an asymmetrical thought process. The fourth conclusion proves asymmetry because the positive and negative items clearly looked different to the respondents. If the confirmatory competencies were stronger, the negatively and positively worded items would cluster together, yielding symmetrical correlation. A way to explain this is that fast is the opposite of

slow. One can't drive a car fast and slow at the same time. However, as proven with satisfaction theory, one can be extremely satisfied and extremely dissatisfied at the same time. Another example would be for a customer service program to train people not to be rude might make them less rude, but it doesn't necessarily make them friendly. Asymmetry suggests that AI is no longer just a philosophical issue; rather, from a data-driven perspective, the notion of focusing on only the positive also holds true.

Are negatively worded questions critical for survey reliability or are we defeating the social constructionist premise fundamental to AI? For AI, you can't create an ALC from fixing the organization's current problems. You must bring in something that's positive, due to the asymmetrical nature of executive interpretation. We cannot assess an appreciative learning competency by focusing on negative questions; we must eliminate the deficit discourse. When an organization decides to embark on an AI process, it requires an unconditional commitment to a strength-based positive approach to organization change.

Conclusion

Four key conclusions were discussed in this chapter. The expansive competency is a foundation for ALCs, as is the collaborative competency. The affirmative and generative competencies are not yet foundations of ALCs and require further analysis. ALCs cannot be built by fixing problems. Although these conclusions are supported

by the data within this study, more research will need to be done as the examination of ALCs moves from a discovery phase to a confirmatory phase.

Chapter 6: Implications for Future Research & Practice

Managers of high-performing organizations find themselves experimenting with their companies' social architecture in an effort to foster innovation and learning.

— Frank J. Barrett, 1995

Introduction to Implications for Future Research & Practice

This study provides some significant strides in understanding appreciative learning cultures (ALCs), but much more research remains to be done. The intention of this chapter is to focus on suggestions for future research, limitations to the chosen methodology, and implications for practical application. Research design focuses on the next steps to meet traditional assessment criteria. Item development outlines a variety of item suggestions to consider. Another section describes potential constructs to take into account on appreciate approaches. Finally, practical implications are geared toward (1) helping the AI practitioner understand the components of the ALC for practice, and (2) offering suggestions for practitioners using the 4-D model and AI summit.

The assessment of an ALC is another AI process that members can use to enrich the generative capacity of dialogue by nurturing specific conversations, particularly through metaphors and stories that facilitate actions supporting our highest potential.

An assessment of an ACL focuses culture-construct conversations on those competencies involved in an appreciative approach. These are the core elements that introduce passionate engagement and that liberate hope and vitality through organizational innovation. Appreciative learning becomes an art form of valuing and inquiring into possibilities.

The conclusions have confirmed the importance and executive understanding of ALCs. A baseline has been developed that can guide future researchers with a data-driven platform for a second round of testing on an ALC instrument. The results of this work have created only the beginnings of study in this domain; there are many opportunities for exploration and further confirmation. Further development of an ALC instrument needs to continue. Following are some areas for further research:

Implications for Further Research

Research Design & Methodology

Although this research successfully assesses the validity of the a priori competencies of ALCs in a generative fashion, the chosen methodology has its limits in being able to deliver on the traditional criteria for assessing the reliability and validity of psychological measures (see Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Subsequent iterations of research, particularly if geared toward the development of an ALC assessment, will benefit from the following changes:

- First, the sample needs to be expanded both in terms of the number of respondents and the diversity of positions and companies represented. Ideally,

we would like to see a sample size of at least 1,200 in order to reduce the statistical calculation of standard error. Furthermore, we would like to see these individuals come from at least 15 different organizations, ideally representing a mixture of profit and non-profit organizations.

- Secondly, we suggest that the positive items that form the ALC competencies be assessed on a 7-point scale. Although work needs to be done to determine whether the reference for responding to those scales should be based on the current organization or the organization at its peak, the use of an interval level measurement will support traditional analyses for validity and reliability. For example, the construct validity of the competencies can be assessed with confirmatory factor analysis and the reliability of the factor scales can be determined with Cronbach's alpha.

- Lastly, it is recognized that further work will need to be done to calibrate a valid and reliable instrument with business outcomes and their causes. Ultimately, the desired assessment of ALC needs to be diagnostic and prescriptive—providing guidance to individuals and organizations in terms of what strengths they can leverage to create an imagined future.

Item Development

Remove of Negative Items

During the original unpacking of Barrett's work, there were a lot more item definitions for each of the four competencies (see Appendix A). As mentioned, many of the items were dismissed to allow for the Q-sort limitations and also allow space for negative items. Because of the data-driven dismissal of negative items, we have space to test additional items from Barrett's work.

Replicate Current Constructs

This was the first confirmation of the competencies. Originally, over 100 items were unpacked from Barrett's work. With the dismissal of negative items, researchers have room to confirm additional items. Some things to consider:

Affirmative Competency

- Reconstruct the items that did not cluster in order to review the action words at the beginning. In other words, action words like *share* and *discuss* have a very collaborative, opening connotation to them. Executives have focused on those collaborative words, as opposed to the remainder of the item.
- It would be interesting to see if *vitality* is comprehensible. Barrett has suggested that the organization's vitality be discussed, communicated, and recognized.
- Understanding if an appreciative vision is anchored in the organization's past accomplishments would be interesting to test.

- Also within the vision, it would be interesting to examine an understanding of leadership's capacity to project a detailed, positively guided image as if that image were already true.
- The creation of success scripts was not tested. Asking whether the respondents have been involved in collaboratively creating success scripts for their team or organization is an important component of the affirmative competency.

Expansive Competency

- *Aspire to greatness* was the only item that did not cluster. This item was fairly exploratory and should be removed from further testing.
- I'd like to understand executives' responses to the extent that there is organizational value on possibilities.
- Include an item on the extent to which leadership demonstrates a belief in members' capabilities.
- I really appreciate the safety issue, as brought up by Barrett. Another item might include members feeling safe when making public their expansive commitments.

Generative Competency

- Like the affirmative competency, there needs to be more sensitivity during the item construction around actions words at the beginning of the item.
- There are many items extracted from Barrett that have not been tested. A number of them have to do with having adequate access to various types of information (e.g., on progress toward goals, on critical quality issues, on

customer satisfaction, on supplier's unique needs). More of these items around access to information should be included in the next test.

- An item around continuous learning, especially leadership's commitment around providing employees with these types of experiences, should be included.
- One of my favorite items within the whole instrument and other areas we explored is ... *see the consequences of their actions*. It clustered very well and should not be taken out.
- System dynamics is important to Barrett's definition of the generative competency. I think an item around the organization's ability to foster an awareness of system dynamics among its members should be tested. I'm just not sure about the comprehension of *system dynamics*.

Collaborative Competency

- This competency is tight. It's also where the opening action words clustered together. I bet if *Consider the whole system in making decisions* would have been *Support the whole system in making decisions*, we would have had a perfect mark.
- The next step here is to take what's working well and build off of that. Since it's so good and the AI folks love their poetic, mystical language, this might be an opportunity to test higher-level vocabulary with lower comprehension.

- The items from the inquiry competency that clustered with the collaborative competency should be considered part of expanding the collaborative definitions.

  I've also included some additional constructs below that might be reviewed and considered within the collaborative competency.

Anticipatory Competency

- This construct did cluster well for its first exploratory test and should probably be reviewed for further testing.

Inquiry Competency

- As mentioned, this competency is clearly clustered with collaboration and should be included in an expanded definition of the collaborative competency.

Additional Construct Considerations

The body of literature concerning appreciative approaches to organizations can be enhanced with a greater delineation of the role that individuals have within the creation of group culture. To consider an appreciative learning system, one has to consider the effects of the individual on the culture. Does the individual have a sense of a personal commitment to learning and individual progress as they see it within the culture? And, does the individual inherently appreciate things, people, systems, etc. as they see it within the culture? One can argue that there cannot be an appreciative learning culture without appreciative learning individuals.

There is significant literature around participatory practices like dialogue (Bohm, 1984, 1996; Isaacs, 1999; Senge, 1990) and conversations (Ford, 2004) that can be tested within Barrett's definition of collaboration. Organizations can be understood as networks of conversation (Ford, 1999)—multiple layers of conversations that are embedded in other conversations. This means that change agents work with, through, and on conversations to generate, sustain, and complete new conversations to bring about new patterns of action that result in the accomplishment of specific commitments. Theory on dialogue and conversations was not deconstructed in the design or in subsequent implementation of traditional organizational culture assessments tools.

There has been tremendous interest among AI practitioners to understand the role of positive emotions in the workplace. This would be a fascinating area to explore within the context of appreciative learning systems. Fredrickson's work (1998, 2003) suggests this is true, in part because of the power of positive emotions. According to her "broaden and build" model, negative emotions such as fear, hostility, anxiety, and apathy lead directly to "fight or flight" behaviors, in essence narrowing a person's response options. Positive emotions, on the other hand, broaden a person's capacities. In the AI process of discovering strengths, sharing dreams, and designing and enacting the desired organization, positive emotions are activated such as interest, joy, hope, and pride in the association with others, the work, and the organization. These in turn lead to the enhanced thought-action repertoires associated with them.

For example, interest leads to investigation, exploration, becoming involved, having new experiences, and incorporating new information, all characteristics associated with learning. Joy leads to play, imagination, invention, and experimentation, all characteristics associated with innovation. Hope leads to seeing adversity as a challenge, transforming problems into opportunities, maintaining confidence, rebounding quickly after setbacks, putting in hours to refine skills, and persevering in finding solutions—all characteristics associated with achievement and goal accomplishment. Pride leads to supporting others, expressing gratitude and appreciation, connecting, and relating—all characteristics associated with cooperation, coordination, collaboration, and pro-social behavior. Thus, positive emotions generate energy by equipping people with the enhanced thought-action repertoires that enable them to feel "eager to act and capable of action" (Quinn & Dutton, 2005). Over time, these emotional response patterns become enduring resources that buffer against depleting experiences and that fuel high performance.

Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio (2007) developed a model for psychological capital PsyCap), applying specific guidelines from positive psychology research. Consideration should be given the HERO components of PsyCap: hope (will and way), efficacy (confidence), resiliency (bounce back and beyond), and optimism (positive expectations). According to the authors, these factors are capable of development and show correlation to performance outcomes. PsyCap constructs fit in the continuum as being "statelike;" that is, they are not as stable and are more open to

change and development when compared with "trait-like" constructs such as Big Five personality dimensions or core self-evaluations. Also and importantly, they are not momentary states.

Implications for Practice

Understanding the ALC Components for AI Interventionists

There are many different ways to do appreciative inquiry, and each AI process will be unique based on its purpose, the context in which it is done, the constellation of people involved, the skill and preferences of those leading or facilitating, the kinds of resources available, and perhaps most importantly, the surprises, innovations, and improvisations that occur along the way. There are also a number of factors that influence its effectiveness; however, more attention could be given to the design, by considering the organization's appreciative learning cultural values and normative behaviors. I contend that there would be value to the AI interventionist in understanding more about the organization's culture, with an appreciative learning lens, prior to embarking on any of the existing forms of engagement.

Each AI process is designed to meet the unique needs and goals of the people, organization, or community involved. See Appendix E for a brief description of the AI forms of engagement, adapted from Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003). During the selection phase for the appropriate form of engagement, there is an emphasis on the needs and goals of the constituency. However, these groups and organizations also have distinct appreciative-learning cultural values and norms. These cultural

elements should be taken into consideration prior to the selection of the engagement type.

For example, within a positive change network, members of an organization are trained in AI and provided with resources to initiate projects and share materials, stories, and best practices. This requires an affirmation and generative capacity among the AI trained members. From an affirmative perspective, if the AI team is not capable of appreciating positive possibilities through a positively guiding image and not capable of self-monitoring themselves, the change network might lose momentum. From a generative perspective, if they aren't capable of seeking the consequences of their actions, realize that they are contributing toward a desired goal, or experiencing progress, the initiative might lose energy.

Understanding the ALC Components of the 4-D Model

Designing a 4-D model or planning for an AI summit does not normally include a thorough consideration of the intrinsic values with the culture. Sure, numerous factors are considered in the design; however, based on my review of the 4-D model, the organization's culture is not one of those input mechanisms. In other words, if we understood the cultural values and norms around the expansive competency, would that alter the design of the "dream" stage"? In some organizations, dreaming and innovating are part of everyday life, embedded in normative behaviors. They might have mature processes around envisioning the future. On the contrary, members of other organizations might have never been part of looking past the end of the current

project, with sole focus on immediate deliverables. There has to be a situational view on the expansive nature of the organization before finalizing the approach to the dream stage of the 4-D model.

Overall Summary

The research offered here provides significant analysis of Barrett's original work on appreciative learning cultures and the assertion that organizational innovation requires generative learning, as opposed to adaptive learning. It has begun the process of creating a validated instrument to measure appreciative learning cultures in organizations.

The results were successful at confirming the validity of Barrett's (1995) expansive and collaborative competencies but call for further development of his affirmative and generative competencies. In addition, the study offered an intriguing finding about the limitations of traditional survey methods when it comes to measuring appreciative dynamics in organizations. Negatively worded items in the Q-sort rarely clustered with their positively worded counterparts. This suggests that to measure the presence of a positive aspect of culture with a negative indicator may be invalid, confirming underlying assumptions of appreciative inquiry.

We have seen the merit of Barrett's competency constructs; however, more work is needed to flush out additional construct considerations and specific item development. These opportunities have been outlined in this chapter's main section

dedicated to future research implications. This work is needed to further understand ALCs and provide guidance to the practitioner.

Appendix A: List of Total Items Generated and Their Correlation

Affirmative Competency

Construct	*Correlation*
Actively focus on what's been done well in the past	+
Actively focus on its current strengths	+
Members achievements are fully identified	+
Members achievements are fully celebrated	+
Members strengths are fully identified	+
Members strengths are fully celebrated	+
The organization's vitality is discussed, communicated and recognized	+
The organization encourages members to disregard possible hindrances and obstacles	+
You have been involved in collaboratively creating success scripts for your team or organization	+
Your unit focuses on the team's strengths and competencies	+
Your unit spends time focusing on peak experiences from the past	+
You have positive expectations for your team's performance	+
Your leaders find subtle ways to invoke positive anticipation by focusing on success	+
Your leadership has the capacity to project a detailed positive guiding image as if that image were already true	+
The organization has groups successful at self-monitoring	+
Stories of groups successful at self-monitoring are shared with the organization	+
Leadership pays careful attention to cues that trigger anticipation in organizational members	+
Strengths and competencies are shared with the organization (individual, team or organizational strengths)	+
There is a strategic intent to value core competencies	+
Intangible strengths are focused on ("focused on" should imply 'sought out' then 'shared' then 'action')	+
Intangible strengths are sought out	+
Intangible strengths are communicated	+

Intangible strengths are utilized for action planning	+
An appreciative vision is anchored in the organizations past accomplishments	+
Future opportunities are linked to current and past strengths and successes	+
Rational analysis is primarily used in estimating chances of success or failure? (Is this an either/or scenario; i.e., rational focus or peak performances)	-

Expansive Competency

Construct	*Correlation*
Leadership challenges habits within the organization	+
Leadership challenge conventional practices within the organization	+
Members are provoked to experiment in the margins	+
Members are provoked to think "out of the box"	+
Leadership makes expansive promises that challenge members to stretch in a new direction	+
The organization has a vision that challenges members to go beyond familiar ways of thinking	+
Members are provoked to stretch beyond what has seemed to be "reasonable" limits	+
Members are motivated to redefine the boundaries of what they experience as constraining	+
The organization holds a picture of what "might be" up to a realistic picture of the present	+
Members are energized towards creative thinking	+
Members are encouraged to make public their expansive commitments	+
Members feel safe making public their expansive commitments	+
Members feel they have the space to freely experiment with new ideas	+
Stretching beyond conventional constraints is a core value	+
Customers are led with service/products or asked what they want	+
Customers have been given provocative promises	+
leadership demonstrates a belief in members' capacity	+
The organization values possibilities	+
Failure is punished	-
Members are afraid to do the wrong thing	-
Leadership has a tendency to address only those problems that are familiar	-
Leadership has a tendency to address only those issues that have an imaginable solution	-

Generative Competency

Construct	*Correlation*
Members see the consequences of their actions	+
Members recognize that they are making a meaningful contribution	+
Members are able to experience a sense of progress	+
Timely feedback is given to members so that they are able to sense that they are making a meaningful contribution	+
Elaborate feedback is given to members so that they are able to sense that they are making a meaningful contribution	+
Members realize that their day to day tasks make a difference	+
Members realize that their efforts are contributing toward a desired goal	+
Members have opportunities to directly interact with their customers	+
There is a sense of a "shared destiny" between your organization and its suppliers	+
New partnerships are sought out	+
New partnerships are created	+
There is collaboration with suppliers, customers and employees	+
There is mutual responsibility with suppliers, customers and employees	+
Members have access to information that might usually only be available to higher members of the organization	+
Leadership is committed to providing employees with experiences that contribute to continuous learning, even if in the short term it seems to have a higher cost	+
In designing new products/services, members from all specializations spend considerable amount of time up-front discussing and negotiating details	+
Members feel they participate in progress toward a larger project	+
The organization engages in process mapping processes for improving workflow efficiencies with members of various functions, rank, customer and suppliers	+
Data is often collected and disseminated with non-hierarchical, cross-functional groups to allow members to see whole processes, where and how information is	+

generated, and who needs the information	
Members experience the impact of their contribution toward a larger purpose	+
The organization foster an awareness of system dynamics among its members	+
Members have access to critical information on progress toward goals	+
Members have access to information on critical quality issues	+
Members have access to information on customer satisfaction	+
Members have access to information on suppliers' unique demand	+
The organization creates partnerships that disrespect traditional boundaries so that the stakeholders feel responsible for the whole identifiable tasks	+
The organization creates partnerships that disrespect traditional boundaries so that the stakeholders experience a shared destiny in meeting organizational goals	+
Activities to discourage fragmenting thinking are often evoked	+
You are disconnected with your immediate customers	-

Collaborative Competency

Construct	*Correlation*
The organization creates forums in which members engage in ongoing dialogue?	+
The organization creates forums in which members can exchange diverse perspectives?	+
The organization utilizes dialogue as a powerful tool to transform integrated systems?	+
Members feel safe inquiring and exploring the assumptions that inform their actions?	+
Leadership emphasizes dialogue across the organization?	+
Leadership encourages dialogue with suppliers?	+
Leadership encourages dialogue with customers?	+
Leadership hase the belief that through interaction new ideas will emerge?	+
The organization creates arenas of accessibility in which members are included in the evolution of policies and strategies where members can actively respond to one another?	+
Leadership values dialogue as a central element to organizational transformation?	+
There is a disrespect for hierarchy and other boundaries to inclusion and involvement?	+
The organization deliberately creates access to decision making forums?	+
Leadership fosters norms that legitimize members' right to question and provoke at all levels of organizational activity?	+
Leadership creates systems that foster dialogue about possible actions and initiatives?	+
The organization has systems that allow members to think creatively?	+
The organization has systems that allow members to question commonly accepted definitions?	+
The organization has systems that allow members to go beyond previous conceptions?	+
Leadership legitimizes conversations about organizational vision and direction?	+
Members feel that through dialogue they are part of a joint discovery?	+
The organization creates multiple forms of responsiveness?	+
Leadership remains open to the emergence of new voices?	+

Leadership remains open to the emergence of new perspectives?	+
Leadership is willing to have their thinking interrupted?	+
The organization creates contexts in which members have a sustained presence?	+
The organization creates contexts in which members feel free to respectfully vocalize perspectives without restraint or fear of reprimand?	+
Leadership promotes multiple perspectives?	+
Leadership encourages continuous debate?	+
Leadership is committed to fostering diversity among decision making?	+
Leadership is aware that the hierarchical distinctions of titles, roles and rewards often block participation and involvement?	+
The organization has an effective mentoring program?	+
Leadership normally delivers monologues then withdraws into invulnerable space?	-
Leadership normally makes assertions then withdraws into invulnerable space?	-
Communication follows a hierarchical rigidity within the organization?	-
Members consider the risks associated when speaking out about their suggestions?	-

Anticipatory Competency

Construct	*Correlation*
encourage positive thinking about the future	+
imagine future possibilities	+
have positive expectations	+
have a clear vision of the future	+
talk about high ideals	+
work on what makes sense today	-
dialog about current issues	-
be practical about the future	-

Inquisitive Competency

Construct	*Correlation*
be curious and inquisitive	+
ask questions to build understanding	+
have more questions than answers	+
ask about what works	+
probe into current assumptions	+
use good questioning skills	+
accept that things are done this way for a reason	-
ask questions if they are good	-
limit curiosity because it can be distracting	-
believe that we do things best	-

Appendix B: Final Item List by Competency

Indicate the extent to which your company encourages people to:

Affirmative Competence

	Content Code
Positive	
learn from past successes	371
discuss current strengths	921
share stories about successes	341
commit resources to personal development	141
use your strengths and interests at work	531
Negative	
rationalize all analysis	792
leave history in the past	312
seek out root causes for failure	422
investigate blame	682
communicate weaknesses	942
place a person in the job that they currently do best	412

Provocative Competence

Positive	
think out of the box	673
innovate and experiment	143
pursue new ideas and opportunities	783
challenge conventional practices	943
aspire to greatness	253
Negative	
punish failure	634
address only problems that are familiar	284
focus on issues with an imaginable solution	924
point out flaws	314
oppose new ideas	254
take few chances	684
avoid confrontations	514

Generative Competence

Positive	
have the feeling that they are making a meaningful contribution	545
understand how their job contributes to the greater whole	275
shape the future	835
continuously learn	195
have access to information for doing their job well	455
translate values into action	145
see the consequences of their actions	675
experience a sense of progress	745
Negative	
focus on immediate tasks	346

stay distant from customers	636
do your job and leave the mission to us	716

Collaborative Competence

Positive

share best practices	877
engage in constructive dialog	637
build positive working relationships	257
support the work of others	377
consider the whole system in making decisions	447

Negative

deliver monologues then withdraws into invulnerable space	728
communicate within a rigid hierarchy	618
consider the risk associated when speaking out about suggestions	478
shelter knowledge, due to it's power	898

Anticipatory Competence

Positive

encourage positive thinking about the future	379
imagine future possibilities	839
have positive expectations	489
have a clear vision of the future	529
talk about high ideals	419

Negative

work on what makes sense today	250
dialog about current issues	740
be practical about the future	830

Inquisitive Competence

Positive

be curious and inquisitive	721a
ask questions to build understanding	971b
have more questions than answers	121c
ask about what works	271d
probe into current assumptions	461e
use good questioning skills	531f

Negative

accept that things are done this way for a reason	382a
ask questions if they are good	532b
limit curiosity because it can be distracting	412c
believe that we do things best	792d

Appendix C: Respondent's Activity Data Handout

Name: _____

Affiliation: _____

Activity #1

Please list any item number(s) that do not make sense to you in the box below:

Activity #4

Identifying Superstars (clear wins)

Which item(s) are most important to you in this pile?
Or, which one(s) really express your pile the best?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

Name: _____

Affiliation: _____

Activity #5

Given the six competency definitions on this handout, please scan through your piles and identify the following:

1) Which one of these competencies best describes each of your piles?

2) Is there a competency that runs a close second?

Please put your corresponding pile number into the appropriate box:

	1st Choice	2nd Choice
Affirmative		
Expansive		
Generative		
Collaborative		
Anticipatory		
Inquisitive		

If no competencies apply to your pile, please list pile number(s) below:

Appendix D: Respondent's Competency Definitions Handout

Affirmative Competence

The organization draws on the human capacity to appreciate positive possibilities by selectively focusing on current and past strengths, successes, and potentials.

Expansive Competence

The organization challenges habits and conventional practices, provoking members to experiment in the margins, makes expansive promises that challenge them to stretch in new directions, and evokes a set of higher values and ideals that inspire them to passionate engagement.

Generative Competence

The organization constructs integrative systems that allow members to see the consequences of their actions, to recognize that they are making a meaningful contribution, and to experience a sense of progress.

Collaborative Competence

The organization creates forums in which members engage in ongoing dialogue and exchange diverse perspectives.

Anticipatory Competence

The organization inspires action by envisioning and enacting possible futures

Inquisitive Competence

The organization learns and develops confidence by encouraging people to be curious, inquisitive and ask positive questions.

Appendix E: Appreciative Inquiry Forms of Engagement

Form of Engagement	Summary Description
1. Whole-System 4-D Dialogue	All members of the organization and some stakeholders participate in an AI 4-D process. It takes place at multiple locations over an extended period of time.
2. Appreciative Inquiry Summit	A large group of people participate simultaneously in a two- to four-day AI 4-D process.
3. Mass-Mobilized Inquiry	Large numbers of interviews (thousands to millions) on a socially responsible topic are conducted throughout a city, community, or the world.
4. Core Group Inquiry	A small group of people selects topics, crafts questions, and conducts interviews.
5. Positive Change Network	Members of an organization are trained in AI and provided with resources to initiate projects and share materials, stories, and best practices.
6. Positive Change Consortium	Multiple organizations collaboratively engage in an AI 4-D process to explore and develop a common area of interest.
7. AI Learning Team	A small group of people with a specific project—that is, an evaluation team, a process improvement team, a customer focus group, a benchmarking team, or a group of students—conducts an AI 4-D process.
8. Progressive AI Meeting	An organization, small group, or team goes through the AI 4-D process over the course of 10 to 12 meetings that are each two to four hours long.

Adapted from Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 32

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