

APPRECIATIVE RESEARCH

From the Appreciative Paradigm

A new Research Model for the Social Sciences



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INTRODUCTION

For over 10 years, I have taught Appreciative Research as an alternative course to the quantitative and qualitative research methods programs offered at the undergraduate and graduate levels in the Communication Studies Department at San José State University in California. To be completely candid, I have to state that, of all the different courses I have taught at the university, this one has had the most transformative impact on my students and it has also inspired them to show great motivation and engagement in all the different tasks and activities required. I am confident that the secret to the course's transformative power and commitment to excellence lies in its focus on discovering what gives us life and passion, and its ability to enable us to see the potential talents we possess, which we discover and develop with the completion of each aspect of the study program. It has also allowed us to reveal the best qualities of the organizations, teams, and communities in which we conducted the final Appreciative Research project

It is based on these experiences that I write this brief essay, which has two fundamental objectives: firstly, to introduce **Appreciative Research as an original model of Applied Research in the field of social sciences**, distinct from other research models, and secondly, to propose a **theoretical/paradigmatic and methodological framework for teaching Appreciative Research as an alternative university course at the undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels in the social sciences**.

In order to achieve these objectives, I have divided the essay into two parts. In the first, I introduce the fundamental components of the **theoretical/paradigmatic framework of Appreciative Research**, and in the second, I present the **basic methodological components of the process of Appreciative Research**. The proposal I provide in this text, encompassing both the **theoretical-paradigmatic framework** and the **methodological approach of Appreciative Research**, draw from both my personal experience and the writings of David Cooperrider, the original creator of Appreciative Research, as presented in his book: *Prospective Theory: Appreciative Research: Toward a Methodology for Understanding and Enhancing Organizational Innovation*" (Cooperrider, 2021).

Part One

THEORETICAL-PARADIGMATIC FRAMEWORK OF APPRECIATIVE RESEARCH

In this first section, I begin by outlining the origin and definition of Appreciative Research, followed by its theoretical/paradigmatic framework, known

as the **Appreciative Paradigm**, and then explore the fundamental and distinctive characteristics of Appreciative Research in the field of social sciences.

I. ORIGIN AND DEFINITION OF APPRECIATIVE RESEARCH

1.1. The origin of Appreciative Research

Appreciative Research originated from David Cooperrider's doctoral dissertation, written under the guidance of his mentor Suresh Srivastva, which he presented in 1985. The aim of that dissertation, in his own words, was to *"to propose the vision and conceptual logic of Appreciative Research (AI) as a research methodology whereupon the knowledge interest was not intervention but a new form of future-forming or prospective theory"* (Cooperrider 2021, p. 3). He chose to call it **Appreciative Research** instead of **Appreciative Research**, but what has actually been practiced since the creation of Appreciative Research is the utilization of the original Four-D methodology (Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny) for social change, and it continued to be referred to as *Appreciative Research* rather than Appreciative Intervention. Consequently, the original research component aimed at generating new theoretical and practical knowledge, for which it was initially designed, was largely overlooked. Recent academic debate (Pavez, Godwin, & Gretchen, 2021) also acknowledges that the emphasis on social change has indeed led to the neglect of the original research dimension of Appreciative Research, which was created to be a model of applied research. Cooperrider himself noted *"that Appreciative Research was not intended as a tool for doing the work of organization development and human systems change"* (Cooperrider, 2021, p. 5).

The reality is that now, the vast majority of scholars and practitioners consider that **Appreciative Research** is associated with the **methodology of social change rather than the methodology of research**. To avoid this terminological and conceptual confusion regarding what we mean when we say Appreciative Research, I take the liberty of suggesting that we refer to the research methodology as **Appreciative Research** and the social change methodology as **Appreciative Research**. In Spanish, the term **Appreciative Research, as a methodology for social change**, has been translated as *"Intervención Apreciativa"* (Varona 2009), although a few years later it was translated as *"Indagación Apreciativa"* (Subirana & Cooperrider, 2013) .

I believe that the proposal I have made for the paradigmatic framework called the *Appreciative Paradigm* (Varona, 2023) effectively avoids the terminological and conceptual confusion that exists. Within the framework of the Appreciative Paradigm, it is evident that **Appreciative Research is not the same as Appreciative Research, and that both Appreciative Research and Appreciative Research are two components of the Appreciative Paradigm** (Varona, 2023).

1.2. Definition of Appreciative Research

As described by its creator Cooperrider, Appreciative Research serves as a model of **Action-Research** (Reason & Bradbury, 2008) and **Applied Research** (Hedrick, Bickman, & Rog, 1993). It incorporates elements from these and other traditional research models in the social sciences, such as Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), Social Construction Theory (Gergen & Gergen, 2004), and various other theories briefly outlined by Cooperrider in the preface of his book *Prospective Theory* (Cooperrider, 2021, pp. 3-39). From its inception, Appreciative Research has challenged certain ontological and epistemological assumptions of these research models in order to create a new model with its own distinct identity. Appreciative Research is presented as an action-research approach *“that meets the criteria of science as spelled out in generative-theoretical terms”* (Cooperrider, 2021, p. 5), setting it apart from the models that originally inspired it. Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic that defines Appreciative Research, as asserted by Cooperrider himself, is its **prospective** dimension (Cooperrider, 2021, p. 15-39); that is, it is a research model primarily focused on the **construction of theory** that enables the anticipation and envisioning of opportunities **to shape a better future** for humanity and the social and natural systems in which it operates.

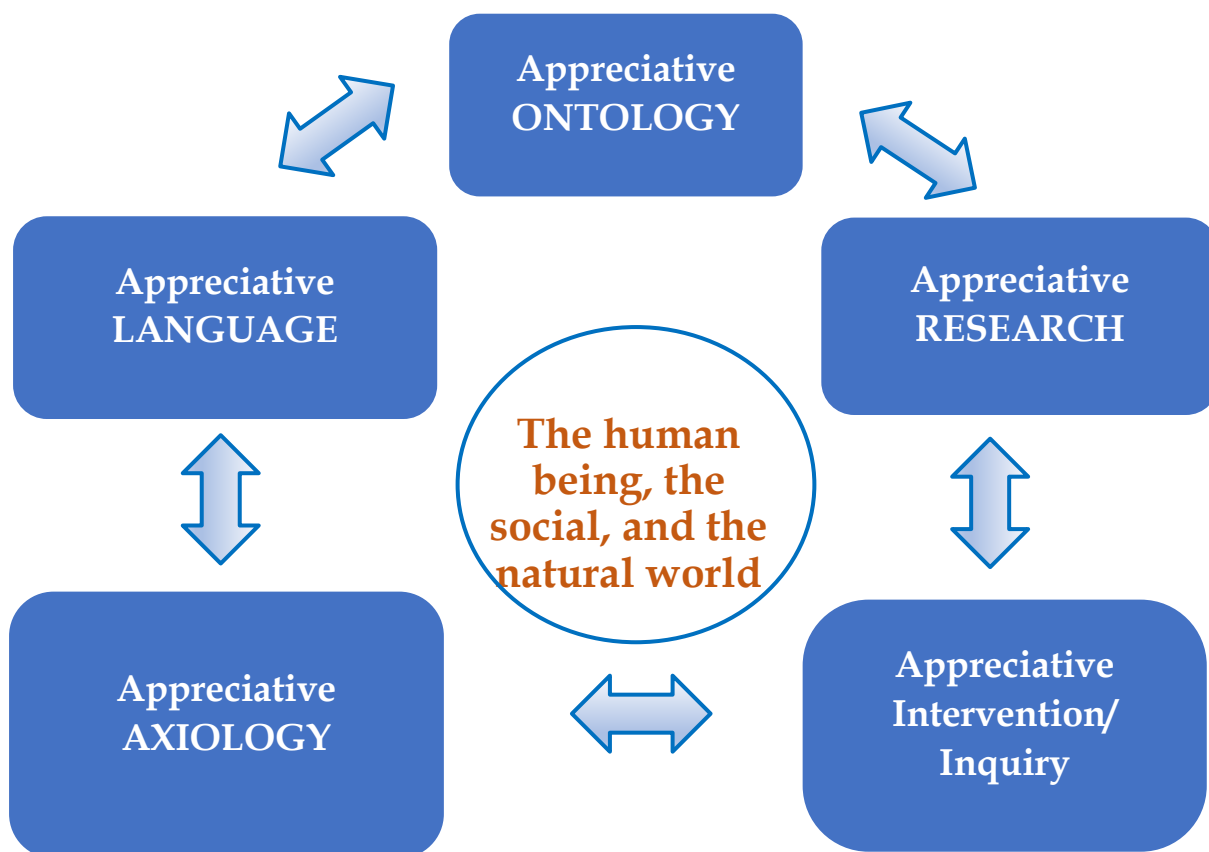
II. APPRECIATIVE RESEARCH FROM THE APPRECIATIVE PARADIGM

Appreciative Research (or epistemology), that is, how to **come to know (investigate)** human beings in terms of their behavior in the social and natural world in which they operate, is one of the five components of the Appreciative Paradigm (Varona, 2023). Therefore, in order to comprehend what Appreciative Research entails, one must have an understanding of the Appreciative Paradigm, which *“in the social sciences is a specific way of **understanding** (ontology), **researching** (epistemology), **transforming** (praxis), **valuing** (axiology), and **speaking** (language) about human beings and their behavior in the social and natural world in which they live that is adopted by a global community of academics and practitioners and which has proven to be more successful than other existing paradigms, as evidenced by the development and success achieved at the practical and theoretical level in the first 35 years of its existence”* (Varona, 2023).

Appreciative Research represents a new way of understanding research in the field of social sciences, with its theoretical and empirical foundations emerging from the **Appreciative Paradigm**. Consequently, Appreciative Research incorporates Appreciative Ontology, Appreciative Research/Intervention, Appreciative Axiology, and Appreciative Language. The fundamental characteristics of each of these components of the Appreciative Paradigm are elaborated upon in the essay titled **“The Appreciative Paradigm: From Methodology to Paradigm”** (Varona, 2023).

Figure 1

Components of the Appreciative Paradigm



2. 1. Appreciative Ontology and Appreciative Research

The fundamental principles of Appreciative Ontology, that is, how the Appreciative Paradigm sees and defines human beings and their behavior in the social and natural systems in which they operate, which inspire and guide the conception and practice of Appreciative Research are as follows:

First, Appreciative Research sees humans and the social and natural world in which they operate as an interconnected system and a mystery that we cannot fully understand. We always find that there is something we cannot explain and that simultaneously inspires admiration and disillusionment. This vision radically changes our relationship with the world and with others, and therefore the way we conduct research. Appreciative Research knows that to understand and change human behavior, it has to discover how it is interconnected with the entire social and natural system of which it is a part.

Second, Appreciative Research believes that in every human being and in every social and natural system in which they operate (family, team, organization, community, and nature), there is a core of strengths, a positive potential that is waiting to emerge and that we have to discover and develop collaboratively.

Third, Appreciative Research believes that the vision we have as human beings of ourselves and the social and natural reality in which we operate is subjective, socially co-constructed, and dynamic, that is, always changing. Social reality (observable behavior in a social system) is perceived very subjectively by each of its actors and therefore each one constructs their vision of reality. This subjective vision of reality only becomes conscious when it is communicated, and only in dialogue with others can we construct it.

Fourth, Appreciative Research believes that human beings have an infinite creative capacity as demonstrated in the world that we have co-constructed since our appearance on earth. Just observe the creativity achieved in technology, the arts, architecture, agriculture, etc., and what is waiting to emerge with artificial intelligence.

Fifth, Appreciative Research believes that human beings and social systems generate an irresistible energy and desire to strive for a better future from the moment we are invited to discover our positive core and collectively enhance it.

2. 2. Appreciative Research/Epistemology

The fundamental principles of Appreciative Research/Epistemology (Varona, 2022; Varona, 2024), that is, how to come to know (research) human beings and their behavior in the social and natural world in which they operate, which inspire and guide their conception and practice are as follows:

First, Appreciative Research discovers what gives life (animates) to humans and all social systems in extraordinary, ordinary, and tragic moments (Cooperrider, 2021). By doing so, it includes something that traditional research has ignored, which is to investigate the extraordinary and the ordinary and not just what is not working (the problem), which has been the dominant focus of research in the social sciences.

Second, Appreciative Research aims to discover the future that is about to emerge. Our goal is to investigate what we are and what we want to become as human beings, as a society, as an organization, as a team, as a cosmos (Cooperrider, 2021, p. 27). We research to create prototypes of a better future that will transform our lives and society (Cooperrider, 2021).

Third, Appreciative Research is a form of applied qualitative research (Cooperrider, 2021). That is, a research methodology that is capable of creating not only new social theoretical knowledge but also new practical social knowledge

(Reed, 2007). Its goal is to discover a new explanation and new action prototypes that allow us to better understand and transform the social world (Cooperrider, 2021).

Fourth, Appreciative Research challenges classical research methods in the social sciences and asserts that we can be original theorists and that theorizing inductively from the real world, with real voices and in real contexts, we can not only create more relevant theories but also invite theorizing in a more original and creative way (Cooperrider, 2021, p. 29). Therefore, it incorporates methodologies that have been ignored in the social sciences, such as art, poetry, meditation, intuition, etc. (Cooperrider, 2021).

Fifth, Appreciative Research believes that research and social change are simultaneous processes. Appreciative Research proposes that the change we want to emerge in people, organizations, and communities when we conduct research begins from the very first moment the research process is initiated and not only when the action plan or new social change scenarios that have been generated are implemented. Most traditional research methods in the social sciences have ignored this principle.

2. 3. Appreciative Intervention/Inquiry and Appreciative Research

The fundamental principles of Appreciative Intervention/Inquiry, that is, how we change human beings and the social systems in which they operate, which inspire and guide the conception and practice of Appreciative Research are as follows:

First, Appreciative Research believes that change in human beings and the social systems in which they operate begins by discovering the positive potential that exists in them and what gives life in extraordinary, every Second, Appreciative Research believes that to generate positive social change and the future that is about to emerge for human beings and the social and natural systems in which they operate, we must generate new prototypes (scenarios) of behavior for that future that is about to emerge.

Third, Appreciative Research believes that the process of change for human beings and social systems consists of six fundamental phases: 1) ANTICIPATE the inner point of awareness from which all participants will operate; topic and planning of the Intervention. 2) DISCOVER the core of strengths with the Appreciative Interview. 3) DREAM of the ideal future we want to emerge. 4) DESIGN the culture and structure of that ideal future. 5) LIVING that ideal future. 6) VALUE (Evaluate) the process and results of the Intervention. These phases are flexible, meaning they are neither unique nor rigid.

Fourth, Appreciative Research believes that personal and social change is collaborative, inclusive, and creative. All members of a social system are included in the entire change process with equal power in deliberation and decision-making.

Fifth, Appreciative Research believes that the appreciative praxis of personal and social change is gestalt (holistic), meaning that the process of change includes emotions, rationality, intuition, admiration, imagination, will, and commitment.

2. 4. Appreciative Axiology and Appreciative Research

The fundamental principles of Appreciative Axiology (Varona, 2024), that is, how we value human beings and their behavior in the social and natural world in which they operate, which inspire and guide the conception and practice of Appreciative Research are as follows:

First, Appreciative Research values what gives life to human beings and social systems in ordinary, extraordinary, and tragic contexts. Everything that happens to humans and everything that happens in social systems is an opportunity to discover, learn, and improve.

Second, Appreciative Research values the positive potential that every human being and social system has. This positive potential must be discovered and developed.

Third, Appreciative Research values the enormous creative capacity of human beings to build a better world because there is always room for improvement. We value creating something new or better when we discover something does not work, instead of just fixing it.

Fourth, Appreciative Research values the power of focusing on the positive. We believe that when we focus on the positive, we awaken the best that exists in human beings and social systems: their motivation, energy, creativity, and commitment.

Fifth, Appreciative Research values the power of anticipating how we will act before doing so (the anticipatory principle) to develop creativity and excellence in the execution of what we do.

2. 5. Appreciative Language and Appreciative Research

The fundamental principles of Appreciative Language (Varona, 2023), that is, how we speak about human beings and their behavior in the social and natural world in which they operate, which inspire and guide the conception and practice of Appreciative Research are as follows:

First, Appreciative Research believes that the language we use creates the world we live in on a personal level and in the different social systems in which we operate, as well as the world we want to emerge in ourselves and in the different social systems in which we operate. The words we use create what we see, what we feel, what we are. Appreciative Language can generate new possibilities and change

our way of seeing, feeling, and acting. If we want to change ourselves and the world we live in, we must change our language.

Second, Appreciative Research believes that we must know how to appreciatively listen to the negative in order to reframe it and thus be able to see the negative as an opportunity to generate new positive possibilities for understanding and action.

Third, Appreciative Research believes that Appreciative Language generates emotions, thoughts, and affirmative actions; and that it is more powerful than rational language that generates ideas and concepts.

Fourth, Appreciative Research values and practices the use of metaphor, poetry, storytelling, that is, metaphorical and poetic, narrative language because it communicates with more depth, strength, and beauty than conceptual and expository language.

Fifth, Appreciative Research values personalized and inclusive language because it generates more commitment and collaboration when acting.

III. FUNDAMENTAL AND DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF APPRECIATIVE RESEARCH IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

In this section, I present the fundamental and distinctive characteristics of Appreciative Research that enable us to assert that it is **a novel and different way of conceptualizing and practicing research in the field of social sciences**. These characteristics encompass the following: first, a fresh approach to **generating new theoretical and practical knowledge**; second, a new way of **understanding what we want to research**; third, a novel manner of **uncovering the emerging future**; fourth, a more **effective means of driving social change**; fifth, a different **understanding of the relationship between research and social change**; sixth, an innovative approach to **asking questions** when we conduct research; seventh, a different way of **comprehending the truth that we want to reveal**; and eighth, a new **scientific and cultural revolution in how research is understood and conducted in the field of social sciences**.

3.1. Appreciative Research represents a fresh approach to generating new theoretical and practical knowledge

The primary fundamental characteristic of Appreciative Research, as previously stated, is the creation of new theoretical and practical knowledge to shape the future of a new human being and a new social system that are on the verge of emerging. This firstly entails the development of novel theories that reveal their essence and the factors that influence their behavior, and secondly, the creation of prototypes or operational scenarios for the better future we aim to create (Cooperrider, 2021; Reed, 2007).

Appreciative Research views the human being and the social and natural world in which they operate as an **interconnected system** and a **mystery** that we cannot fully comprehend. It consistently confronts us with aspects that remain inexplicable, simultaneously inspiring both awe and disillusionment. Furthermore, in contrast to traditional research in the social sciences, Appreciative Research is not focused on revealing the status quo merely for the purpose of improvement, but the goal is instead to anticipate the better future that is poised to emerge by engaging in the co-creation of actionable prototypes that make it achievable.

3.2. Appreciative Research offers a new way of understanding what we want to research

Appreciative Research primarily focuses on uncovering, firstly, **the positive core, the existing potential, what works, and the best practices** in human behavior and social systems to construct a better future. Secondly, Appreciative Research centers on **discovering what gives life to the human being and all social systems in extraordinary, ordinary, and tragic moments** (Cooperrider, 2021). In contrast, the objective of research in the social sciences has traditionally been, and still is in most social research models, to identify problems, their causes, and their consequences, and from there, to seek solutions to return to a state of normal functioning or the status quo.

This change regarding what we aim to discover represents a transformative and revolutionary shift in the field of research in the social sciences. According to Cooperrider, *"In distinction to conventional action-research, the knowledge-interest of Appreciative Research lies not so much in problem solving as it does in social innovation: Appreciative Research refers to a research perspective which is uniquely intended for discovering, understanding and fostering innovations in social-organizational arrangements and processes. Its purpose is to contribute to the generative-theoretical aims of social science and to use such knowledge to promote egalitarian dialogue leading to social system effectiveness or integrity."* (Cooperrider, 2021, p. 95).

The reasons why Appreciative Research suggests that we should research the best aspects of human beings and social and natural systems are as follows: The first is because it is a **social reality** that we cannot deny or ignore. Success in social activities is something permanent that explains and manifests itself in human progress across all fields of human endeavor. Therefore, it is the mission of research to first discover this **positive core** and **successful achievements**. Second, it should identify the **factors that make it possible**. Third, it must understand the implications for the construction of a better world. And fourth, it should **extrapolate these factors that make it possible to other human activities in order to foster a dynamic of continuous evolutionary change**.

The second reason is because, as I have stated, these aspects have been **overlooked by traditional research**. It is intriguing to note the historical emphasis that research has generally placed on the study of what does not work, on failures and their causes, with the purpose of eliminating them to enhance human activity. Challenging this practice and the almost obsessive focus on problems has been one of the most significant revolutions and contributions of Appreciative Research to the field of research in the social sciences. This revolution was later incorporated into the field of psychology by Martin Seligman in 1998 when he criticized the almost exclusive focus of research on stress rather than on happiness, giving rise to what is now known as Positive Psychology (Seligman, 2002).

The third reason is due to the **psychological impact that this research has on creativity and commitment to change**. Empirically, through studies conducted in the field of positive psychology, we know that when the brain is stimulated by something positive, such as good news, a success, a beautiful landscape, and so on, it triggers positive energy that enhances self-esteem, fosters a drive for self-improvement, a desire for change, an aspiration for teamwork and a strong work ethic, and, above all, stimulates creativity – meaning the capacity to envision **the future waiting to become the present**. Conversely, the opposite occurs in the brain when it is stimulated by something negative, as confirmed by numerous scientific studies in the fields of neuroscience and positive psychology (Seligman, 2002, 2006).

3.3. Appreciative Research is a novel approach to discovering the future that is about to emerge

The objective of Appreciative Research is **to discover the future that is about to emerge**. As I stated previously, perhaps the most distinctive characteristic that defines Appreciative Research, as contended by Cooperrider himself, is its prospective dimension (Cooperrider, 2021, p. 15-39). In other words, it is a research model whose primary objective is to **construct theory** that enables anticipation and projection of possibilities for creating a **better future for human beings and the social and natural systems in which they operate**. It also involves the creation of prototypes or scenarios of action of that better future that is waiting to emerge, because only when we are capable of anticipating the future can we build it.

3.4. Appreciative Research is a new and more effective way to generate social change

The fundamental factor that gives Appreciative Research this advantage over other research models in the social sciences is its focus on the affirmative (the positive) from the beginning to the end of the entire process. There are numerous scientific studies (Fredrickson, 2009; Seligman, 2002, 2006) regarding how this focus on the positive brings about a series of powerful and transformative changes in the way humans perceive, feel, think, and act, both emotionally and rationally. The social change achieved by Appreciative Research goes beyond mere sustainability or

maintenance of the status quo; it represents an evolutionary and enduring change in pursuit of improvement, advancement, and excellence.

The global track record of the efficacy of Appreciative Research/Intervention is remarkable, as substantiated by articles published across various platforms (**AI Commons**: <https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu/>) and the firsthand accounts shared during regular in-person and online gatherings. Comparative studies exploring the effectiveness of various models of social change demonstrate that Appreciative Research is particularly potent in driving social change (Mandal, 2022). The primary publication offering insights into the global effectiveness of Appreciative Research is the **Appreciative Research Practitioner International Journal** (<https://aipractitioner.com/>).

3.5. Appreciative Research is a new way of understanding the relationship between research and social change

One of the core principles of the Appreciative Paradigm is that **research and social change are processes that occur simultaneously**. Consequently, Appreciative Research posits that the change we aim to instill in individuals, organizations, and communities through research begins from the very moment the research process commences, rather than exclusively during the implementation of an action plan or the emergence of new scenarios of social change resulting from the research (Reed, 2007, pp. vii-viii). This principle has traditionally been overlooked by the majority of conventional research methods in the social sciences.

3.6. Appreciative Research is a new way of asking questions when we conduct research

The questions posed by Appreciative Research are unconditionally positive for several reasons. First and foremost, because it is an approach underpinned by the belief that **the questions we ask ultimately shape the outcomes of our research and the future we aspire to construct**. Secondly, because of the **impact that positive questioning has on creativity**. And thirdly, because what we find when we ask positive questions is **something real and which we have to investigate**, as it often uncovers aspects that have been overlooked by traditional research methods. Appreciative Research employs positive questioning **to uncover the positivity that already exists**, delve deeper into the factors that contribute to it, and **envision the ideal future we aim to build**. The transformative power of positive questioning lies in its capacity to prompt individuals to think and feel differently, fostering greater creativity and commitment in the pursuit and construction of a better world.

3.7. Appreciative Research is a new way of understanding the truth that we want to reveal when we conduct research

The aim of Appreciative Research is **not to uncover an objective truth, its determining causes, and consequences as in positivist scientific research**

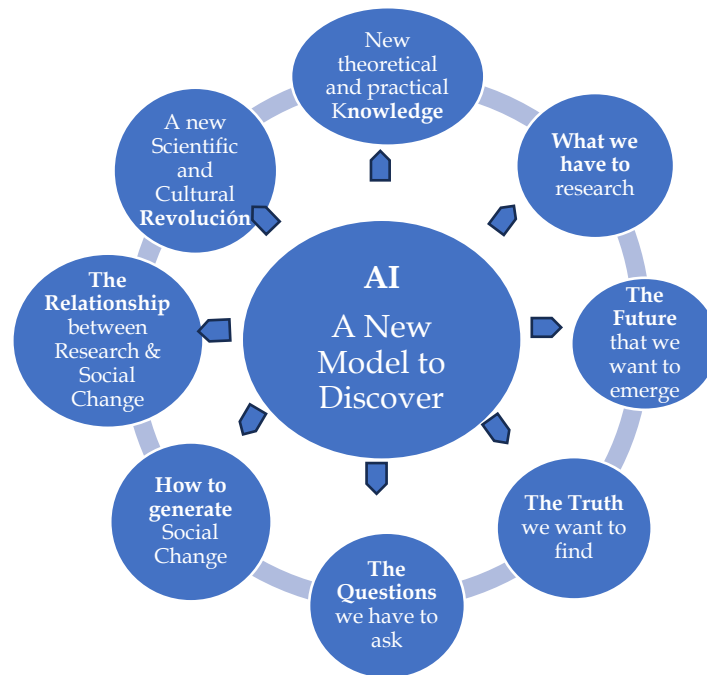
(Brewerton & Milward, 2001). In the social sciences, there is no singular truth but rather **a multifaceted truth that continually evolves due to the constant and uncontrollable intervention of both known and unknown factors**. Human beings and the social and natural world in which they operate remain a mystery that we never fully uncover and understand. Therefore, the ultimate goal of Appreciative Research is to capture this multifaceted and specific truth, which cannot be **generalized** as positivist scientific research attempts to do in the physical or natural sciences. These are two **distinct types of scientific knowledge**, both of which are valid, measurable, and real. The explanation of this truth and the specific factors that determine it, along with its consequences, become the *specific theories* we can develop in the field of social sciences. These theories are legitimate and scientific within the social world in which we live, but are not subject to generalization.

3.8. Appreciative Research is a novel scientific and cultural revolution in the way of understanding and conducting research in the field of social sciences

The advent of Appreciative Research marks a genuine revolution in the approach to conducting research in the field of social sciences and it also represents both a scientific and cultural revolution. As **a scientific revolution**, it signifies a radical departure from the traditional objectives of research in the social sciences. In contrast to conventional approaches, Appreciative Research focuses on investigating what works through positive inquiry, aiming to uncover the best aspects of humanity and the social world, with the intention of forging novel and improved scenarios of social coexistence. Consequently, it incorporates the act of dreaming as an integral element in the exploration of the social reality we seek to understand, transform, and create. Appreciative Research is revolutionary in nature because it embodies a full 180-degree shift from traditional research practices regarding its objectives, methodologies, and outcomes. It is also a cultural revolution, as its inception fosters a fresh cultural perspective on the essence of social research. There is a profound shift in values regarding the relationship between the researcher/consultant and the human beings and social systems targeted for change. This transformation engenders a collaborative, inclusive, and facilitative relationship that fosters a process of co-discovery of the best that exists, what motivates human beings and social systems in ordinary, extraordinary, and tragic moments, and the co-creation of the future that is yet to emerge.

Figure 2

Fundamental and distinctive characteristics of Appreciative Research



APPRECIATIVE RESEARCH

through the lens of the APPRECIATIVE PARADIGM

Part II

HOW TO CONDUCT APPRECIATIVE RESEARCH

The objective of the second part of this essay is to provide a **concise roadmap or practical guide** on how to design an Appreciative Research project, aimed at practitioners of the Appreciative Paradigm, as well as academics and university students. My intention is to **inspire them rather than merely persuade them** to take to the leap and explore this innovative and revolutionary **research model, which holds the potential to generate new theoretical and practical knowledge for building a better world**. I also advocate for its inclusion as an alternative research course within various academic disciplines. Drawing from my teaching experience, I can confidently affirm that this course will be **profoundly transformative** on personal, familial, academic, and professional levels, as **in the Appreciative Paradigm, research and change are simultaneous processes**.

Very little has been published on this topic in either English or Spanish. The most specific and comprehensive resource on Appreciative Research and its teaching as a research method in universities can be found in David Cooperrider's book, *Prospective Theory. Appreciative Research: Toward a Methodology for Understanding and Enhancing Organizational Innovation* (2021). As I mentioned in the first part of this essay, the preface of that book outlines the theoretical framework

of Appreciative Research (Cooperrider, 2021, pp. 11-39), which originates from the course he currently teaches at the doctoral level at Case Western Reserve University. Additionally, Appendix C of the book provides a general overview of the course, including its objectives, content, reading, description of required assignments, schedule, and other resources (Cooperrider, 2021, pp. 267-283). The book also includes his 1985 doctoral dissertation, which serves as the first model for conducting an Appreciative Research. In 2024 the **Appreciative Research Practitioner International Journal** (APIJ) published an Issue on [*Appreciative Research as a Research Method for Qualitative Research and Prospective Theory Building for the Age of Enlivenment*](#)” edited by David Cooperrider and Lindsay Godwin (Cooperrider and Godwin, 2024). In this APIJ Issue, Cooperrider and Godwin published this article: **“A Seminar on Prospective Theory Building: The Life-centric Art and Collaborative Science of Appreciative Research as World-making”** (Cooperrider and Godwin, 2024) and I published in this same APIJ Issue the article: *“Appreciative Research from the Appreciative Paradigm: A new Research Model for the Social Sciences”* (Varona, 2024).]

In this second part of my essay, I provide a brief summary of the content that would need to be developed further in a university course textbook on Appreciative Research. The topics I cover are as follows: first, **models of Appreciative Research**; second, **qualitative methods for collecting and analyzing information**; third, **quantitative methods for collecting and analyzing information**; fourth, **the scientific rigor of qualitative and quantitative research methods** in Appreciative Research; and fifth, **the creation of new appreciative theoretical and practical knowledge**.

I. MODELS OF APPRECIATIVE RESEARCH

In the social sciences, there are numerous research models, but the two most traditional are **qualitative and quantitative research** (Brewerton & Millward, 2001). **The purpose of qualitative research** is to understand and explain the **subjective and socially constructed** nature of human beings and their behavior within the social and natural worlds they inhabit, recognizing this as a specific reality that cannot be generalized. Meanwhile, quantitative research is considered **objective** because it collects and analyzes empirical data, converting it into numerical form to identify behavioral patterns, test hypotheses, make predictions, and minimize researcher subjectivity. For example, in a study on how different types of leadership affect communication within an organization or team, qualitative research seeks to understand the nature, causes, and consequences of these leadership styles on communication as a specific, localized truth that cannot be generalized to all organizations or teams. However, the findings may still provide insights that could improve communication in other settings. Conversely, the purpose of **quantitative** research is to identify the factors within various leadership styles that impact

communication, and based on statistical analysis, to generalize these findings as applicable to all leadership types across all organizations and teams, presenting them as objective truths.

Each of these research models employs **distinct methods for gathering information**. Qualitative research typically relies on techniques such as interviews, while quantitative research favors tools like questionnaires. They also employ their own **methods for analyzing this information**, like content analysis in qualitative research or statistical analysis in quantitative research. Numerous theoretical and methodological differences exist between these two research approaches, and there is a wealth of literature available for those seeking to delve deeper into their distinct characteristics.

In practice, researchers tend to specialize in one of these models, leading to a distinction between qualitative and quantitative approaches. However, there is a third group of researchers who have chosen to employ what is known in the social sciences as **triangulation** (Emmert & Barker, 1989). This approach involves combining multiple methods for data collection and analysis to provide a broader base of empirical information, thereby increasing the generative and prospective potential of new theoretical and practical knowledge. One task that remains is **comparative meta-research**, or research that evaluates the various research models, which could provide valuable insights into the validity and effectiveness of each approach.

Based on my own experience, I believe it is possible to integrate both qualitative and quantitative research models into the practice of Appreciative Research, while making the necessary adjustments to preserve its the core identity. Specifically, and to avoid misunderstandings, I propose incorporating certain methodological components from both models, such as techniques for data collection and analysis. Additionally, though to a lesser extent, we might also incorporate select theoretical elements, such as the recognition that the social realities we investigate are socially constructed and inherently subjective.

II. QUALITATIVE METHODS FOR COLLECTING AND ANALYZING INFORMATION IN APPRECIATIVE RESEARCH

In my many years of experience of teaching research methods at the university level and while engaging in conversations with colleagues and professionals, I have found that the first thing that comes to mind when discussing research methods is **data collection methods**, such as interviews, while the **methods for analyzing that data**, such as content analysis or statistical analysis, are often overlooked or ignored. For this reason, I believe it is important to clarify this distinction in the following sections.

2. 1. Qualitative methods to collect information

In the social sciences there are numerous qualitative methods for **collecting information**. Those most commonly used include individual interviews, focus groups, ethnographic interviews, observation, and diaries, among others. There is extensive literature on these topics detailing the nature and application of each of these methods. Below, I will briefly present two methods that I consider essential to Appreciative Research: first, the **appreciative interview**; and second, the study of **ordinary, extraordinary, and adverse experiences** (personal, social, and professional) that **bring them to life**.

2. 1. 1. The Appreciative Interview

The Appreciative Interview is the primary method used in Appreciative Research to uncover the best in an organization. This interview approach is centered on the art of asking questions that inspire and activate the positive potential within individuals and organizations. The Appreciative Interview lies at the heart of Appreciative Research and is the foundational methodology for collecting information.

Its structure and content are designed to be flexible, allowing for adaptation to the diverse realities of human experience across different contexts. This methodology not only embraces the researcher's creativity but actively encourages it, as there is always potential for improvement. The Appreciative Interview focuses on four key areas: 1. Discover, 2. Dream, 3. Design, and 4. Live, with each area typically featuring three to five questions.

An Appreciative Research generally follows a basic structure consisting of three parts: first, **initial questions**; second, **focal questions**; and third, **concluding questions**.

The first part, **initial questions**, is designed to initiate the conversation in an appreciative manner, encouraging the interviewee to adopt the positive perspective we seek in their responses to the interview topics. An example of such an initial question might be: "What aspect of your organization do you value the most and what motivates you most to work there?" The follow-up question would be, "Why?" It is crucial to use follow-up questions to delve deeper into the topics (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2003).

The second part, **focal area questions**. The focal areas in an appreciative interview correspond to the four central phases of the appreciative methodology: 1. Discover, 2. Dream, 3. Design, and 4. Live. The questions posed in each of these areas should align with the specific objectives of each phase. For instance, in the **Discover focal area**, where the aim is to uncover the best experiences within the organization (whether past or present), if the topic is Excellence in Communication, one of the questions could be: "What is the best communication experience you have had within the organization and where you felt most valued and satisfied?" The follow-

up questions might be: "What **factors contributed** to the success of that experience?", "What did you do to ensure the experience was successful?", or "What other factors contributed to the success of the experience?"

In the **Dream focal area**, the questions might be: "How would you envision the ideal communication within the organization?" In the **Design focal area**, possible questions could be: "What values should guide communication within the organization?" or "What new communication practices should be implemented?" And in the **Live focal area**, one might ask: "What programs should we create to educate and motivate ourselves to embody the excellence in communication outlined in the previous design phase?"

The third part, **concluding questions**. These questions are designed to wrap up the conversation, giving the interviewee the opportunity to provide any additional insights they consider important and to express their hopes and aspirations for the future of internal communication within the organization. Examples of concluding questions include: a) "Is there anything else you would like to add or discuss?" b) "What are your three recommendations to improve the health and vitality of internal communication within the organization?" (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2003). For additional inspiration and examples of positive questions, the book *Encyclopedia of Positive Questions* (Whitney, Cooperrider, Trosten-Bloom, & Kaplin, 2002) can be a very valuable resource when preparing for an Appreciative Research.

When creating instruments to gather information, there is considerable flexibility regarding in the application of standardized norms that are considered fundamental. For example, when designing an interview, there are no strict rules regarding the selection of interviewees, the structure of the interview, the type of questions, their content, or the manner in which the interview is conducted. The responsibility for the validity of the instrument rests entirely on its preparation and the personal and professional ethics of the academic researcher or practitioner (consultant).

The positive questions that we ask in Appreciative Research involve three levels of discovery. The first level is to **discover the existing positive aspects, the successful experiences, or the life-enhancing stories**. The second level focuses on **exploring and analyzing the positive experiences discovered**, that is, identifying the factors or elements that made these experiences positive. The third level encourages **creativity by inviting participants to visualize (anticipate) the ideal future we wish to create**.

Table 1
STRUCTURE OF THE APPRECIATIVE INTERVIEW

PART	OBJECTIVE	EXAMPLES OF APPRECIATIVE QUESTIONS
I. INITIAL QUESTIONS	Identify what they value most about the organization and their contribution to it	What aspect of your organization do you value the most and what motivates you most to work there? The follow-up question would be: Why?
II. FOCAL AREA QUESTIONS: 1 DISCOVER	Identify what gives life to the system (organization, team, etc.) during ordinary, extraordinary, and adverse moments, and its positive core in relation to the research topic	What is the best communication experience you have had within the organization and where you felt most valued and satisfied? What factors contributed to the success of that experience??
2 DREAM	Identify what the system (organization, team, etc.) has the potential to become during ordinary, extraordinary, and adverse moments, and its positive core in relation to the research topic	How would you envision the ideal communication within the organization?
3 DESIGN	Identify the new culture (values) and structure of the system (organization, team, etc.) in relation to the research topic	What values should guide communication within the organization? What new communication practices should be implemented?
4 LIVE	Identify the newly designed system (new organization, team, etc.) and planning and implementing the programs to make it a reality	What programs should we create to educate and motivate ourselves to embody the excellence in communication outlined in the previous design phase?
III. CONCLUDING QUESTIONS	Identify whether there is anything else they would like to add, how they feel, suggestions, etc.	Is there anything else you would like to add or discuss?

In the **appendix** of the article ***Escribir en Equipo, Una Investigación Apiciativa*** (Varona 2023), I present the Appreciative Interview I conducted with a group of academics and practitioners of Appreciative Research. This interview explored their experiences of collaboratively writing an article about one of their experiences as consultants. The resulting article was published by *AI Practitioner - International Journal of Appreciative Research* in September 2021 (Paez & Varona, 2021).

2. 1. 2. Ordinary, extraordinary, and adverse experiences (personal, social, and professional) that give meaning to life

In addition to the Appreciative Interview, another methodology for collecting qualitative information in Appreciative Research is: **Ordinary, extraordinary, and adverse experiences** (personal, social, and professional) **that give meaning to life**.

This methodology draws inspiration from Downs' study of critical experiences (1988) in qualitative research. As noted earlier, Appreciative Research centers on uncovering **what gives life to (animates) human beings and all social systems during ordinary, extraordinary, and adverse moments**. Consequently, this methodology is also crucial in the practice of Appreciative Research. It is a valid and reliable methodology for generating new theoretical and practical knowledge. This methodology can be applied both in social systems (organizations, teams, etc.) and at the personal level, in either written or oral form.

Table 2
FORM FOR APPRECIATIVE EXPERIENCES:
EVERYDAY (ORDINARY), EXTRAORDINARY, AND ADVERSE
EXPERIENCES THAT GIVE LIFE

1. Indicate the type of experience selected: daily (ordinary), extraordinary, or adverse
2. Narrate briefly the most significant elements of what occurred: What happened? When? Where? Who participated? What were the consequences?
3. Analyze the experience: What are the fundamental factors that gave life to this experience? What did you think? What did you feel? How did you react?
4. Generate new theoretical and practical knowledge: What did you learn about what gives meaning to life? What did you commit to doing to experience it more fully?

The strength of this methodology lies in its emphasis on specific experiences – whether ordinary, extraordinary, or adverse – that individuals and social systems have directly lived or observed. This approach allows respondents the freedom to recount and analyze their experiences, providing rich and valuable insights to understand their content and impact. For content analysis and the

development of new theoretical and practical knowledge, any of the methodologies presented in the first part of this essay can be employed.

However, as previously mentioned, the **Appreciative Interview** and the **Study of Ordinary, Extraordinary, and Adverse Experiences that give Life** are not the only methods available within Appreciative Research for gathering information. Other methods can be employed, provided that these qualitative approaches adhere to the core characteristics and goals of Appreciative Research. These methods include such as ethnographic approaches, conversation, reading, meditation, observation, poetry, art, and reflection on everything we experience in daily life.

2. 2. Qualitative methods to analyze information

Appreciative Research also incorporates various methodologies for analyzing the information gathered through the methods mentioned, provided they are proven to be **rigorous and effective in generating new theoretical and practical knowledge to reveal the better future that is emerging** for humanity and social and natural systems.

It is important to note that Appreciative Research has not yet established its own method for content analysis of the information collected through the **Appreciative Interview**. This lack of a standardized approach introduces considerable flexibility in how one proceeds, but also potential limitations in ensuring scientific rigor. In my practice, I have utilized a variant of the **content analysis** method described by Kaid and Wadsworth (1989). The steps of this method are as follows: **1.** Transcribe all responses to each focal area question of the Appreciative Interview. **2.** Identify the themes or topics that emerge from each response and their frequency for each focal area. **3.** Rank the themes based on the frequency with which they were mentioned and their relevance within each focal area. **4.** Select the most relevant themes from each focal area, including some of the most significant **direct responses** from the interviewees. **5.** Write the final report of this analysis by focal areas. This report will serve as the foundation for the next phase of creating theoretical and practical knowledge. In each step of this coding process, it is crucial to involve more than one coder to ensure greater objectivity and validity in the content analysis.

The methodologies for interpreting and analyzing the information collected include **hermeneutic research**, which integrates **the empirical collection of data** (such as personal experiences, interviews, and observation) with **the analysis of its meaning** (van Manen, 1990). Prominent hermeneutic researcher **Jürgen Habermas** emphasizes **dialogue** as a core component, positing that understanding is a cooperative process where participants are required to connect with one another in real life. This methodology focuses on the analysis and interpretation of artifacts. **One of the fundamental principles of hermeneutics is that multiple perspectives must be considered to achieve the most accurate interpretation of what is being**

researched (Busacchi, 2016). In addition to empirical data, we use imagination, intuition, emotion, and reason – which fosters creativity – to analyze social reality and the connections and interactions of variables. This approach allows us to propose new explanations (theories) and develop new action scenarios that emerge from the information collected (practical knowledge). **The methodology for analyzing** ordinary, extraordinary, and adverse life-giving experiences can be adapted from the content analysis method I have outlined.

III. QUANTITATIVE METHODS FOR COLLECTING AND ANALYZING INFORMATION IN APPRECIATIVE RESEARCH

Based on my experience teaching the Appreciative Research course at the university level for more than 10 years, I believe that the quantitative research model can be effectively integrated into Appreciative Research. Moreover, I think this approach may be particularly appealing to quantitative researchers and consultants. We can create **appreciative questionnaires**, just as we create **appreciative interviews**, to discover what gives life to social systems and their positive core, and analyze the results using statistical methods. Using those results, we can generate new appreciative theoretical and practical knowledge to predict the emerging future and work towards creating a better world. This is the beauty of the flexibility and inclusivity of Appreciative Research through the lens of the Appreciative Paradigm.

3. 1. Quantitative methods for collecting information in Appreciative Research

There are numerous quantitative methods in the social sciences for **gathering information**, with **questionnaires**, **pre-tests** and **post-tests**, and laboratory experiments being among the most commonly used. Creating an **appreciative questionnaire** is as straightforward as designing an **appreciative interview**. Essentially, it involves developing affirmative items and utilizing a Likert scale with three to five options. Additionally, we can construct dimensions or factors with five affirmative items each. The potential for creativity in crafting an appreciative questionnaire is significant, including the option to incorporate open-ended questions that give respondents more freedom to express themselves and elaborate on their answers.

3. 2. Quantitative methods for analyzing data in Appreciative Research

The results obtained from the appreciative questionnaire can be analyzed utilizing a range of statistical methods, such as **descriptive statistical tests** (mean, standard deviation, percentages, etc.), and **comparative analysis** tests (such as

correlation, etc.). Extensive and detailed documentation on the nature and application of these methods is available in academic literature on the subject.

Part 2

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR APPRECIATIVE RESEARCH

In this second part, I present a concise summary of the **methodological framework of Appreciative Research**: first, research **models**; second, **qualitative methods** for gathering and analyzing **empirical evidence and information**; third, **quantitative methods** for gathering and analyzing empirical evidence and information; fourth, the **scientific rigor** of qualitative and quantitative research methods; and fifth, the **creation of new theoretical and practical knowledge**. Due to space limitations in this essay, I have chosen not to include a detailed guide on how to conduct Appreciative Research, that is, a roadmap or practical guide. However, I recommend reading this essay: "Collaborative Writing: An Appreciative Research" (Varona, 2023). This research was conducted with a team of academics and practitioners of Appreciative Research/Inquiry Intervention, and followed the theoretical and methodological framework for Appreciative Research.

I. MODELS AND METHODS OF APPRECIATIVE RESEARCH

As I have already stated, Appreciative Research is a model of applied research and action-research in the field of social sciences. Consequently, Appreciative Research is open to integrating theoretical and methodological components from classical research models and new models that emerge. At the same time, it challenges conventional research methods **in the social sciences**, asserting *"that we can all be original theorists, and that theory developed inductively from the real world, with real voices, and in real settings, could not only create more relevance in theory, but also invite more original and creative theorizing"* (Cooperrider, 2021, p. 29). Hence, it also incorporates methodologies that have been overlooked in the social sciences, such as art, poetry, meditation, intuition, and others.

Therefore, Appreciative Research incorporates certain theoretical and methodological elements from the qualitative and quantitative research models, which are the two most traditional approaches in the social sciences (Brewerton & Milward, 2001). For instance, it integrates some of the methods **for gathering empirical evidence and information**, such as interviews in the case of qualitative research or questionnaires in the case of quantitative research. It also includes some of the **methods for analyzing this empirical evidence and information**, such as content analysis employed in qualitative research (Kaid & Wadsworth, 1989), or statistical analysis used in quantitative research.

II. THE SCIENTIFIC RIGOR OF THE QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE METHODS OF APPRECIATIVE RESEARCH

The rigor in the process of collecting and analyzing empirical evidence and information through qualitative and quantitative methods determines the validity, reliability, and credibility of research results. It is crucial to recognize that the rigor of the entire process depends on the ethics and training of the researcher. Acknowledging these and other limitations should not necessarily lead us to the conclusion that this type of research is invalid. On the contrary, it is undoubtedly valid in the sense that it represents the **specific truth discovered and proposed by the researcher**. Therefore, it is a subjective and valid truth (both theoretically and practically) that can be partially extrapolated to similar realities but never generalized universally. The golden rule is unquestionably that *when conducting research, we must be as rigorous as possible throughout the research process*, particularly in the *creation of theoretical knowledge* (theories) and **practical** knowledge (developing new prototypes for social change). One of the pending tasks is **comparative meta-research**, that is, research on different research models, which allows us to assess and compare the validity and effectiveness of each of them.

III. THE CREATION OF NEW APPRECIATIVE THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE IN RESEARCH

As previously mentioned, the primary objective of Appreciative Research is the creation of new theoretical and practical knowledge that enables us to discover, understand, and shape the future that is yet to emerge in order to create better human beings and social and natural systems. The challenge we face is to reveal what this process entails, its theoretical foundations, and the stages of the process that should be followed to achieve that.

Cooperrider provides one of the responses to this challenge in the preface of his book *Prospective Theory* (2021), when he asserts that the theoretical foundation of the method for creating new theoretical and practical knowledge is “**Prospective Theory**”, which he defines as: “*theory that is future-forming, anticipatory, a resource for world-makers, and built on the idea of homo-prospectus*” (Cooperrider, 2021, p. 15). The method he proposes for building prospective theory consists of six constituent elements and three interdependent phases (Cooperrider, 2021, pp. 15-39). Based on my experience, I would like to offer some reflections on the process to create theoretical and practical knowledge, which I believe makes theory creation accessible not only to scientists and academics, but also to practitioners, students, and, indeed, any other interested party.

The creative process of appreciative theoretical and practical knowledge in Appreciative Research begins from the very moment that research commences and it

can even continue after the research has concluded. In Appreciative Research, creativity and research are simultaneous processes. However, there are stages within the research process where the creativity of appreciative knowledge intensifies and is stimulated. These stages begin once the empirical evidence and information have been collected and analyzed using qualitative or quantitative methods. The phases of the creative process in Appreciative Research are the following:

Firstly, **the empirical evidence and information gathered are interpreted and analyzed to discern the central themes that emerge, along with their significance and frequency.** This analysis is conducted in the context of three key dimensions: a) What we discover about the **positive core of the research topic** (the inherent potential within individuals and social systems: what we are, feel, believe, and value) and what gives meaning to our life and to social systems in ordinary, extraordinary, and tragic moments; b) **What we dream** (what we want to be and value as people and as a system (organization, team, etc.)); and c) The future we want to build in terms of **how we intend to act** from now on as individuals and as a system (organization, team, etc.).

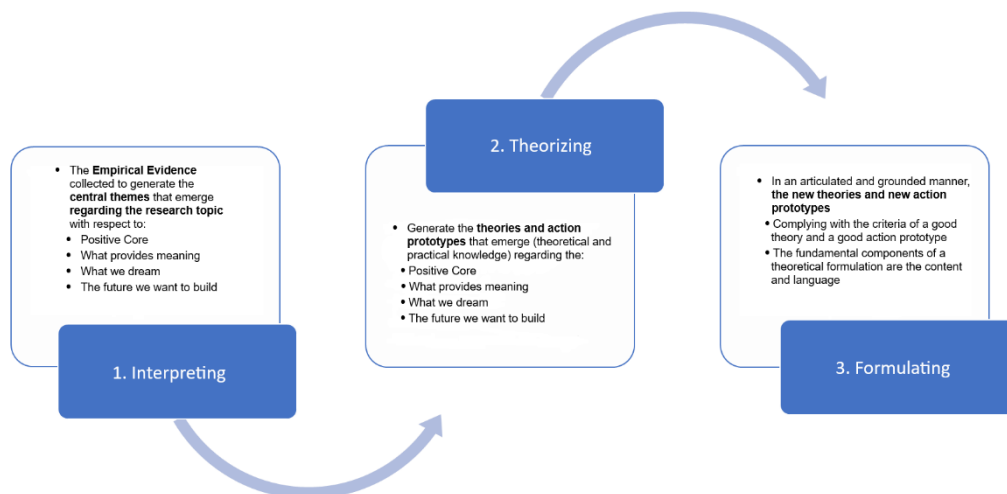
Secondly, the process involves **theorizing**, based on the connections among the central themes that have emerged, and starting to generate a) **explanations (theoretical knowledge-theories)** and **action prototypes (practical knowledge)** in relation to the positive core, what provides meaning, what we dream, and the future we want to build. During this phase, we should ask pivotal questions, such as: What theoretical knowledge or theories lie latent within this data regarding what we are and what we aspire to be? What novel prototypes or action plans (practical knowledge) are poised to emerge from this data in relation to our inherent potential, and how we act from now on? Then it is imperative to await the **emergence and convergence** of these answers before beginning to theorize, that is to say, to create new explanations (theories) and action proposals (prototypes).

Thirdly, we **formulate the new theories and new action prototypes that have emerged in an articulated and substantiated manner.** In this phase we should ensure that the new theories and action prototypes that emerge from the research meet the criteria of what is a good **theory** and a good **action prototype**. The two fundamental components of a theoretical formulation are content and language. We need to make sure that the content is very well grounded and articulated, and that the language is understandable and generates emotion and engagement.

I have termed the theory that underpins this model of creating appreciative knowledge the **Encounter Theory**, which posits that the appreciative creative act occurs when the elements that make it possible come together. The mystery we need to unravel is to identify these components and pinpoint the moment of their convergence.

Figure 3

Creative process of theoretical and practical appreciative knowledge



When we speak of being original creators, we often tend to think of individuals like Albert Einstein and Nobel laureates, whom we label as geniuses. However, within the Appreciative Paradigm, "**we can all be original theorists**" (Cooperrider, 2021, p. 29). In other words, each of us has the capacity to construct a new way of perceiving reality, and this novel perspective is **an original creative act** precisely because it differs from others. It may even be the case that our way of seeing things becomes recognized by others as their own. Nevertheless, even if it goes unacknowledged by others, it remains a valid original creative act. *Creativity is the ability to conceive, formulate, and disseminate explanations and imagine action scenarios that differ from the status quo, and it can occur at any age and in any context.* We all possess the power to envision a different way of acting and to be original creators if we dare to do so with discipline, perseverance, and without fear of making mistakes

IV. THE PROCESS OF CONDUCTING AN APPRECIATIVE RESEARCH

In this section, I offer a basic, brief, and guiding overview of how to plan and execute an Appreciative Research both at the academic level and for appreciative practitioners or consultants. The Appreciative Research process has three fundamental phases: The first is the planning or research proposal phase, the second is the execution phase, and the third is the creation of the final report and/or the document to be presented and published.

Graphic

PHASES OF CONDUCTING AN APPRECIATIVE RESEARCH



Phase 1: Planning or Research Proposal for Appreciative Research

One of the principles of the Appreciative Paradigm is the anticipatory principle, which states that to achieve the best results, one must anticipate the best possible action before acting. This means imagining, visualizing, and planning what, why, how, who will do it, when, and the change we want to achieve (the objectives). Therefore, planning the research before its execution is fundamental to the success of Appreciative Research.

From the Appreciative Paradigm, everyone who will be part of the research—the research team, participants, that is, all members of the social system (organization, team, community, etc.)—must participate in some way in planning all the activities of the Appreciative Research process. Participation must be as inclusive and realistic as possible. There are many modes of participation, and selecting the most participative mode must be done according to the concrete reality and available resources and time. The objective should be to carry out the research with the highest possible rigor under the given circumstances. However, the research should not be suspended when conditions are not ideal.

The main activities that need to be carried out as part of this first phase of planning the research are as follows:

First, **define (select) the team** that will conduct the Appreciative Research and the internal standpoint from which they will operate, that is, define the level of motivation and commitment with which they will participate.

Second, **choose the social system in which the research will be conducted** (organization, team, etc.) and define the relationship and conditions of participation and collaboration with which the entire process will operate. Selecting the social system where the Appreciative Research will take place is not always easy. There are many challenging aspects, and perhaps the most difficult one is convincing the managers to accept the research. From the Appreciative Paradigm, every human being and social system has a positive core and potential that must be discovered. Additionally, what we seek with Appreciative Research is to discover what gives life, meaning, enthusiasm, and commitment to human beings and social systems in the ordinary, extraordinary, and adverse aspects of daily life. Therefore, every human being and social system is a subject of Appreciative Research.

Tercera, **definir el tema específico** de la Investigación Apreciativa formulado de una manera afirmativa que incluya el futuro que se quiere crear, es decir, el cambio que se quiere lograr. Desde el Paradigma Apreciativo el objeto de estudio de la Investigación Apreciativa es el ser humano y su comportamiento en los sistemas sociales y naturales en los que se desenvuelve (organización, equipo, comunidad, etc.). Todo ser humano y todo sistema social posee un núcleo positivo y un potencial que debe ser descubierto y que puede ser desarrollado por que siempre es posible mejorar. Por lo tanto, las posibilidades de temas para una Investigación Apreciativa son innumerables y tienen que surgir desde los miembros de la organización y ser temas provocadores y retadores que inspiren pasión y compromiso.

Fourth, **define the specific objective** of the Appreciative Research in relation to the chosen topic, which from the Appreciative Paradigm must focus on discovering what gives life to humans and social systems to create new theoretical knowledge (explanations, theories) and practical knowledge (prototypes of culture and structure of the better future that is emerging). The planning and execution of the Appreciative Research can be carried out in two different ways: theoretical (which emphasizes theoretical knowledge creation) and integrative (which combines theoretical and practical knowledge creation for social change).

Fifth, **define the theoretical framework** that will illuminate and guide the Appreciative Research. This requires reviewing some of the research conducted on the topic. Reviewing the published research on the topic of our inquiry in scientific journals or other serious and responsible media is very necessary to contextualize our research and scientifically ground it. This review will give us the opportunity to see, for example, whether there are any publications on the subject, what research questions were asked, what methods were used to collect and analyze data, and most importantly, what theoretical and practical discoveries were made. This information can guide us in planning and executing the research and especially in creating new theoretical and practical knowledge when we compare the discoveries made with those that emerge from our research. This is how we advance and

contribute to the knowledge of human beings and their behavior in the social and natural systems in which they operate. As always, this review will be done within the limits of our possibilities, but it should never be a reason not to conduct our research if we cannot do this review of the published literature on the topic.

Sixth, **define the research questions and/or hypotheses.** One of the learning principles of the Appreciative Paradigm is that "all learning begins with a question." The questions we ask create what we discover (Barrett & Fry, 2008). Therefore, it is fundamental in an Appreciative Research to formulate the appreciative questions that will guide our research when it is qualitative. There is also the possibility of formulating affirmative hypotheses instead of questions, which is more common when the study has a quantitative component. A hypothesis is simply the formulation of a statement of what we want to discover with our research. Any question can be turned into a hypothesis, and any hypothesis can be turned into a question.

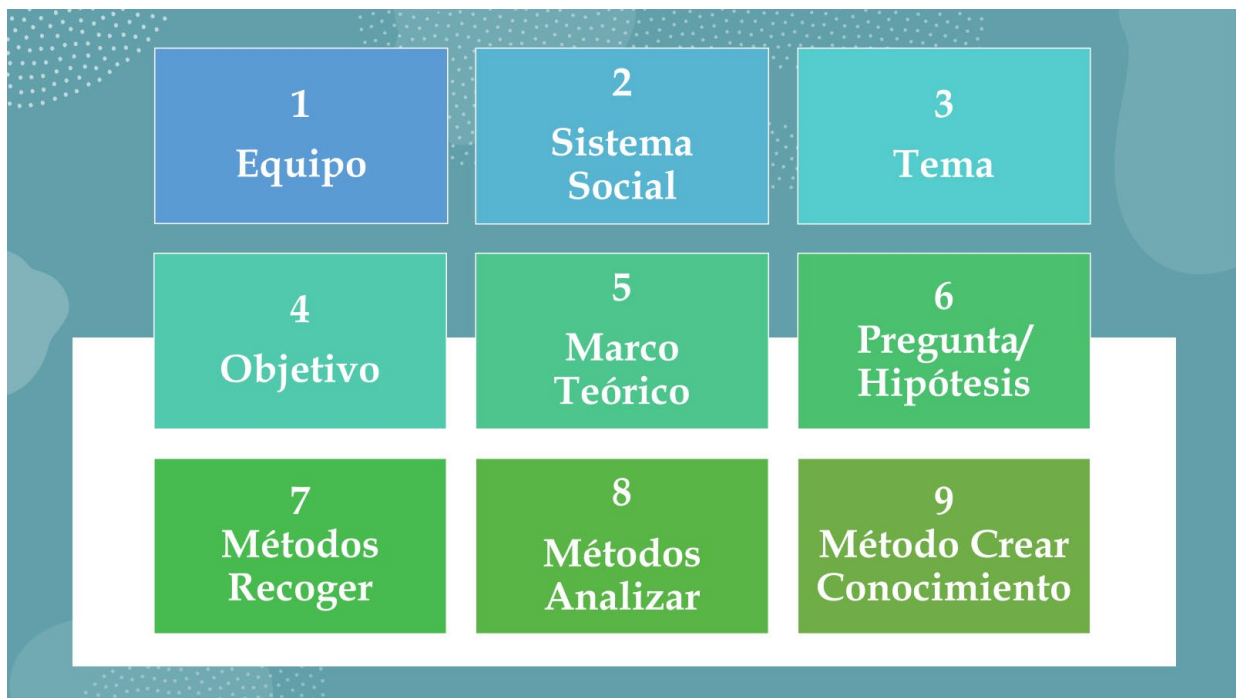
Seventh, **select the methods and create the respective instruments for collecting empirical information.** As previously indicated, the methods can be qualitative, like interviews, or quantitative, like questionnaires. Defining the methods for collecting empirical information is fundamental because, as the Appreciative Paradigm states, "we collect what we ask." "If we ask about problems, we collect problems, and if we ask about solutions, we collect solutions." Therefore, Appreciative Research always uses the affirmative question.

Eighth, **select the methods and create the respective instruments for analyzing the collected empirical information.** These methods can be qualitative, like content analysis in the case of interviews, or quantitative, like statistical analysis in the case of questionnaires. The creation of methods for collecting and analyzing information is the heart of any research, meaning the most important part, as it determines the validity and significance of the entire research.

Ninth, **define the process of creating theoretical and practical knowledge.** This activity is the most original and fundamental aspect of Appreciative Research and the one that will make it possible to create new theoretical and practical knowledge, that is, the creation of new theories and new scenarios of that better future that is emerging. The creative process must be both rigorous and simple, and we must dare to engage in it because, for the Appreciative Paradigm, we can all be original creators of theory (Cooperrider, 2021, p. 29) and prototypes of new scenarios of social behavior.

The list and order of these activities, which I propose as a basic and organic roadmap, are, of course, subject to all kinds of change and adaptation.

Gráfico 6
**FASES DE LA PLANIFICACIÓN
 DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN APRECIATIVA** (Note: Needs to be translated to
 Spanish)



Phase 2: Execution of the Research

Once the planning or research proposal is completed, it is time to begin executing the nine activities described in the previous section on planning or proposing an Appreciative Research. In this execution phase, the fundamental tasks are as follows:

First, establish contact with the social system where the research will be conducted (organization, team, etc.) and define the relationship and conditions of participation and collaboration that will be in place throughout the entire process.

Second, carry out the collection of empirical information and its analysis using the chosen and created methods.

Third, proceed to the interpretation and creation of new theoretical and practical knowledge.

Gráfico 7

FASE DE LA EJECUCIÓN DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN (Note: Needs to be translated to Spanish)



Phase 3: Creation of the Final Report and/or Document to be Presented and Published

This is the phase that, in my opinion, we need to promote more, especially among practitioners (consultants) of the Appreciative Paradigm. I am convinced that their practice has untapped potential for creating new theoretical and practical knowledge. I believe that if we encourage them by offering an easy and rigorous model, like the one I am trying to provide in this essay, and create a publication medium where they can present their Appreciative inquiries and interventions, we will achieve this.

We need to create a Spanish version of the AI Practitioner | International Journal of Appreciative Research to make these publications possible. We should also offer guidance to those who need it to ensure that the reports meet the requirements of the research journals where the publication will be made (digital or paper).

Table 3

CONTENTS OF THE FINAL REPORT AND/OR THE DOCUMENT TO BE PRESENTED OR PUBLISHED

I. Introduction: Objective and table of contents of the final report.

II. Theoretical Framework.

III. Description of the organization.

IV. Description of research methods:

1. **Method for collecting empirical information: Focal Areas.**
2. **Method for analyzing empirical information: Content Analysis or Statistical Analysis.**
3. **Detailed description of the characteristics of those who participated in the research and responded to the appreciative interview or questionnaire, or other methods used to collect information.**

V. Report of the results obtained from the analysis of information collected by Focal Areas.

VI. Report of the creation of theoretical and practical knowledge by Focal Areas.

VII. References.

VIII. Appendices (Tables, Graphs, etc.).

Extension of the Report

The length of the report will depend on its purpose, the characteristics of the recipients, and the requirements of the publication medium.

CONCLUSION

I hope to have achieved the two main objectives of this essay: First, to present Appreciative Research as the epistemological component of the Appreciative Paradigm for the creation of new theoretical and practical knowledge that makes the construction of a better world possible. Second, to present Appreciative Research as an original model of Applied Research in the field of social sciences, different from other models. I want to conclude with three invitations:

First Invitation: For practitioners of Appreciative Research/Intervention to include the component of scientific research in their interventions to increase the creation of new theoretical knowledge in addition to the practical knowledge they are already effectively producing. Specifically, I want to invite them to act as scientific researchers and not just as agents of change because it is possible, as I explained in the second part of this essay. I believe that practitioners (consultants) can greatly contribute to the theoretical field of Appreciative Research because there is nothing more theoretical than good practice if we follow the norms of applied scientific research; and "there is nothing more practical than a good theory" (Lewin, 1951, p. 169).

Second Invitation: For academics to dare to teach Appreciative Research as an alternative course to research courses at the undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels in social sciences, humanities, business, etc., so that our university students can become original creators of new appreciative theoretical and practical knowledge for the construction of a better world. The future of the Appreciative Paradigm and Appreciative Research is in the hands of university youth.

Third Invitation: For academics and practitioners of the Appreciative Paradigm to write and publish more in Spanish, thereby contributing to the development of the Appreciative Paradigm and the creation of new theoretical and practical knowledge from the perspective of the cultures of the Ibero-American region. I conclude by saying that what I present in this essay is not written in stone but in sand, and therefore much can be modified and much has been left unsaid. This is a task to which I invite everyone to participate.

X. APPENDIX: APPRECIATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE (Varona, 2023).

APPRECIATIVE INTERVIEW

to value the work of the writing as a team:
"developing appreciative Latin American teams"

The objective of this appreciative interview is to discover and value everything affirmative that we experienced in the process (choosing the topic, content, writing, etc.) of the article each of us wrote with the collaboration of the editors and team members. From this, we aim to build new appreciative and transformative knowledge (new theory and practice) about the art of writing an article as a team.

Before answering the following questions, please briefly review the article you wrote and those of your team members, as published in *AI Practitioner - International Journal of Appreciative Research*. [*AI Practitioner - International Journal of Appreciative Research*](#)

Note: Please use bullet points (1, 2, etc.) to differentiate your answers to each question. Feel free to elaborate on your responses if necessary, but a brief answer (even one word) will suffice.

INITIAL QUESTIONS:

- 1.1. What appreciative emotions did you experience during the process (choosing the topic, content, writing, etc.) of writing your article as a member of this team?
- 1.2. What creative achievements did you experience during the process (choosing the topic, content, writing, etc.) of writing your article as a member of this team?
- 1.3. What factors most influenced the success we achieved in getting our articles published in the AI Practitioner International Journal?
- 1.4. What are the three activities of the process we followed that could improve if we were to write another article as part of this team?

CENTRAL (FOCAL) QUESTIONS:

Phase I: Discovering the Affirmative Core of our Team:

- 1.1. What talents (capabilities) did you discover in yourself during the process of writing the article?
- 1.2. What talents (capabilities) did you discover in the other team members during the process of writing the article?

Phase II: Dreaming of the Ideal Team We Want to Be to Be a Successful Writing Team:

- 2.1. What talents (capabilities) would you like to have to write an article?
- 2.2. What talents (capabilities) would you like the team members to have to write an article?

Phase III: Building the Ideal Team We Want to Be:

- 3.1. What values should a team's culture have to be successful in the art of writing an article? Values that guide the mental and emotional state from which we must operate throughout the process to be successful.
- 3.2. What structures, action scenario prototypes (requirements, practices, activities, etc.) should we design for a team to be successful in the art of writing an article?

Phase IV: Living the Ideal Team We Want to Be to Be Successful in the Art of Writing an Article:

- 4.1. What action programs (activities) should a writing team undertake to motivate themselves to write successfully as a team?
- 4.2. What action programs (activities) should a writing team undertake to perfect the art of writing as a team?

FINAL QUESTIONS:

1. Would you like to write another article with this team? If yes, please indicate why.
2. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your answers and the time spent responding.
You will receive a copy of the document resulting from the content analysis of the
responses received

CONCLUSION

I hope I have achieved the two central objectives of this essay: first, to propose and briefly elaborate on Appreciative Research as the epistemological component of the Appreciative Paradigm and as a new alternative for scientific research in the social sciences to create new theoretical and practical knowledge that enables the construction of a better human being and a better social and natural world; and second, to propose a theoretical/paradigmatic and methodological framework for teaching Appreciative Research as an alternative university course at the undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels. To conclude, I would like to invite **academics** to have the courage to teach Appreciative Research so that our university students can become original creators of new appreciative theoretical and practical knowledge for the construction of a better world. The future of the Appreciative Paradigm and Appreciative Research lies in the hands of these students.

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