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## Moving Through Collective Adversity: Lessons from Posttraumatic Growth Research for Appreciative Inquiry Practice

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# Moving Through Collective Adversity

## Lessons from Posttraumatic Growth Research for Appreciative Inquiry Practice

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By Kelly Gesmundo Clarke

### Abstract

Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996, 2004) developed the theory of Posttraumatic Growth to explain the experience of growth after trauma. Their work primarily focuses on the individual experience. More recently, Gilpin-Jackson (2014, 2020) and Saul (2014) explored the experience of transformation, healing, and recovery after collective trauma. Appreciative Inquiry was introduced in the late 1980s as a strengths-based approach to organizational change (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). The Appreciative Inquiry method guides an organization through the change process by first selecting the “affirmative topic” to be addressed and then proceeding through a “4-D Cycle” of Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p.16). Key findings from the Posttraumatic Growth and collective trauma literature, identifying the factors that enable growth and recovery, can inform and adapt the 4-D Appreciative Inquiry model for use in trauma and adversity contexts. This article argues that the model can be revised to successfully address trauma and adversity through the addition of a new phase or activity: meaning making. The potential for *meaning making* to create transformative change after collective adversity is demonstrated with examples from the Kalamazoo County Land Bank’s work in Michigan over the last decade.

**Keywords:** Posttraumatic Growth, Appreciative Inquiry, meaning making, land banking, adversity, organization change

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It’s in times of disruption that the best in human systems can burst forth.

—David Cooperrider  
“Appreciative Inquiry in a Broken World,” 2020

As this article was written in late 2020 and early 2021, COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths had reached a record high, states continued to struggle with orders that could be accepted by their constituencies, and organizations and communities remained in the thick of uncertainty, disruption, and adversity. Undesired adversity and trauma are not new phenomena to organizations and communities; economic

crises, bankruptcy, natural disasters, and market failure impact them frequently. What is uncommon is for so many organizations and communities to simultaneously experience their own micro traumas while they also experience collective traumas on a national and global scale.

This recent experience of multi-level trauma has increased the attention paid to resilience and recovery. Practitioners wish to build tools to better respond to the dynamics of collective trauma and adversity. David Cooperrider (2020) wrote in his blog:

And while there are dozens of articles flying around everywhere on the pandemic’s lessons for leaders,

there is little on the tools, mindsets, and change management methods for advancing collective resilience together. And little on advancing deeply developmental trajectories together.

Organizational systems can hinder positive growth, or they can enable it. To continue experiencing growth, organizational systems need change processes that are equipped to handle trauma and adversity. This article explores how organizations can enhance existing change practice, become trauma-informed, and better address collectively experienced adversity.

The literature on Posttraumatic Growth and collective trauma identifies key findings, principles, and practices that have been found effective in helping individuals and groups move through trauma and adversity. This article reviews this literature and applies a trauma-informed lens to the change process of Appreciative Inquiry, a positive-strengths-based approach to organizational change (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). In this method, an organization moves through the change process by first selecting the “affirmative topic” to be addressed and then proceeding through a “4-D Cycle” (Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny). This article adapts the 4-D model of Appreciative Inquiry for use with trauma and adversity by integrating findings from the Posttraumatic Growth and collective trauma literature.

The organizational practice applications of this revised Appreciative Inquiry model are explored through the work of the Kalamazoo County Land Bank. The author has worked in the context of a state and national community of county-established land bank authorities for the last decade. A land bank is a statutorily created entity whose mission is to repurpose, renew, and reconnect blighted and abandoned property. These entities have largely been created in the wake of the Great Recession, an economic crisis driven by the housing market collapse of 2008, and an era that brought massive amounts of property abandonment in post-industrial communities throughout the Midwest and in

other U.S. geographies. Because it exists to address these related phenomena, a land bank provides an example of how organizational change practice can effectively create growth in the context of collective trauma and adversity.

The work of the Kalamazoo County Land Bank discussed here surfaced the power of collective resiliency—the ability to bounce back from trauma—but more notably, it also surfaced the power of collective, post-adversity growth. In the author’s experience, when the community was at its most vulnerable, when its core had been shaken and its future was uncertain, residents were eager to provide their knowledge, tenacity, and help once they were provided an invitation and platform to contribute. The projects that provided space for a collective process of creative expression, reflection, and participation in designing the desired future were most likely to come to fruition, and were also most strongly associated with significant positive transformation.

This article argues that the 4-D approach of Appreciative Inquiry can be modified to address contexts involving collective trauma by intentionally including an additional phase, early in the process: *meaning making*. The addition of meaning making provides space for context-specific practices that can draw from a range of existing approaches including mindfulness, reflection, powerful questions, generous listening, therapeutic writing, storytelling, and the arts. Meaning making activities are where the practice of Appreciative Inquiry and the literature on Posttraumatic Growth and collective trauma can come together, creating a powerful change process that allows organizational systems to move through adversity in a manner that supports growth and transformation.

## Literature Review

### Posttraumatic Growth

Posttraumatic Growth (PTG) is a theory developed by psychologists Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun to explain the phenomenon of individuals who see positive growth after trauma. While their early work on the concept began in the 1990s

(Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996), their conceptual framework is well summarized in a 2004 article in *Psychological Inquiry* in which they discuss how the highly disruptive nature of the traumatic experience provides an environment for people to develop new understandings of their world and their relationship to it (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). The experience of PTG is frequently life changing, and the adversity encountered is experienced as empowering rather than debilitating. Change is multi-dimensional and includes belief system, life goals, and identity. “Post-traumatic growth describes the experience of an individual whose development, at least in some areas, has surpassed what was present before the struggle with the crisis occurred” (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004, p. 4).

More recently, Tedeschi, Shakespeare-Finch, Taku, and Calhoun (2018) completed a thorough review of the PTG work developed over the last two decades in their book *Posttraumatic Growth: Theory, Research, and Applications*. In this work, the researchers define PTG as the changes that occur in people after an event, rather than defining it in relation to people’s responses during an event.

PTG is focused on longer-term changes that come about after more careful reflection. Post-trauma is usually an extended time period, from days to years, where people develop new ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving, because the events they have experienced do not permit a return to baseline functioning. (Tedeschi et al., 2018, p. 5)

The effect of the traumatic experience provides an opportunity for understandings that allow the individual to orient towards the world with a more empowered, solutions-oriented, and related mindset (Tedeschi et al., 2018).

In a recent article, Tedeschi (2020) nicely summarized the five elements of PTG tested in an earlier study measuring PTG indicators amongst individuals who had experienced trauma (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996): appreciation of life, relationships with others, new possibilities

in life, personal strength, and spiritual change. In this article, Tedeschi also drew on earlier work that explores how growth could be facilitated (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; Tedeschi et al., 2018). In summary, Tedeschi (2020) found that growth after trauma can be facilitated through five enabling factors: education, emotional regulation, disclosure, narrative development, and service. *Education* is described as the cognition that one's core beliefs and assumptions have been disrupted. *Emotional regulation* is defined as the ability to manage anxiety, confusion, and other nega-

**In this analysis, Saul does not present a prescription or model for collective recovery and healing after trauma; rather, he shows that collective experience is rooted in culturally and contextually specific differences. His work emphasized that: a) caring facilitators and expert practitioners are helpful in providing tools and processes for transformation; and b) trusted local leadership, and meaningful and authentic engagement of the individuals impacted by the trauma, are both critical.**

tive emotions and call on a recognition of existing resources and possibilities. *Disclosure* is defined as the articulation of the “what” that is happening. *Narrative development* is defined as the process of beginning to articulate a new narrative that defines what the desired new state looks like. Finally, *service* is defined as the act of engaging in work that is helpful to others. Each of these five enabling factors involves fully acknowledging the traumatic experience, and its profound effects, in order to work toward growth in its wake.

### Collective Trauma

While PTG research primarily focused on the individual (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996; Tedeschi et al., 2018; Tedeschi, 2020), more recent work on transformation and recovery through trauma has considered this phenomenon at the collective level. Gilpin-Jackson's (2014, 2020) work on transformative learning in a post-trauma environment explored the concept of resonance—a moment of awakening, through

personal stories, that opens space or creates opportunity for transformative learning. In a narrative inquiry study of African war survivors, Gilpin-Jackson further explained resonance as the experience of positive transformation and learning from collective trauma achieved through a process of storytelling (2014).

Jack M. Saul's book, *Collective Trauma, Collective Healing: Promoting Community Resilience in the Aftermath of Disaster* (2014), described case studies regarding individual and community response to collective trauma in locations around the world.

Regarding examples of how communities have collectively recovered from catastrophe, Saul noted that “community initiative and participation are crucial at every state of the recovery process” (2014, p. 182). The case studies demonstrated how narratives, including theater and public performances, have fostered recovery in communities that have been devastated by events ranging from 9/11 to civil conflict.

Saul (2014) advocated for a multi-systemic approach to recovery, including creativity and flexible methods that can respond appropriately to specific contexts. Based on the variety within the case studies, Saul found that a trauma-informed method of change should not assume similarity across contexts, but rather should enable work that responds authentically to differences:

As such, this approach to promoting community resilience and recovery needs to be adjusted to fit different situational, communal, and cultural contexts. And we must go about this

work with tools, skills, and guiding principles, recognizing that no single solution will apply consistently across different communities. (2014, p. 182)

In this analysis, Saul does not present a prescription or model for collective recovery and healing after trauma; rather, he showed that collective experience is rooted in culturally and contextually specific differences. His work emphasizes that: a) caring facilitators and expert practitioners are helpful in providing tools and processes for transformation; and b) trusted local leadership, and meaningful and authentic engagement of the individuals impacted by the trauma, are both critical.

In Saul's case studies, the interplay between individual and collective healing sometimes took the form of public acknowledgement and sometimes took the form of collective theater or other artistic activity. The process of collective narration was “crucial to give the shared experience of trauma meaning and purpose” (2014, p. 183). Arts activities were found to have powerful potential to support healing and growth after collective trauma.

Like the PTG literature, the collective trauma literature emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the experiences and effects of trauma in depth. Crucial factors for success in moving through collective trauma include transformation through narrative, community leadership, creative and flexible methods, contextual specificity, and the use of storytelling and the arts.

### Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry (AI), first articulated by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva (1987) and later developed by Cooperrider with other co-authors (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider & Fry, 2020), guides an organization through the change process. In this method, the organization first selects the “affirmative topic” to be addressed and then proceeds through a “4-D Cycle” that looks at the best of “what is” (Discovery), imagines the future (Dream), builds a plan for the future (Design), and supports an iterative process for implementation and ongoing

Appreciative Inquiry  
4-D Model for Change  
(Cooperrider & Whitney,  
2005, p.16)

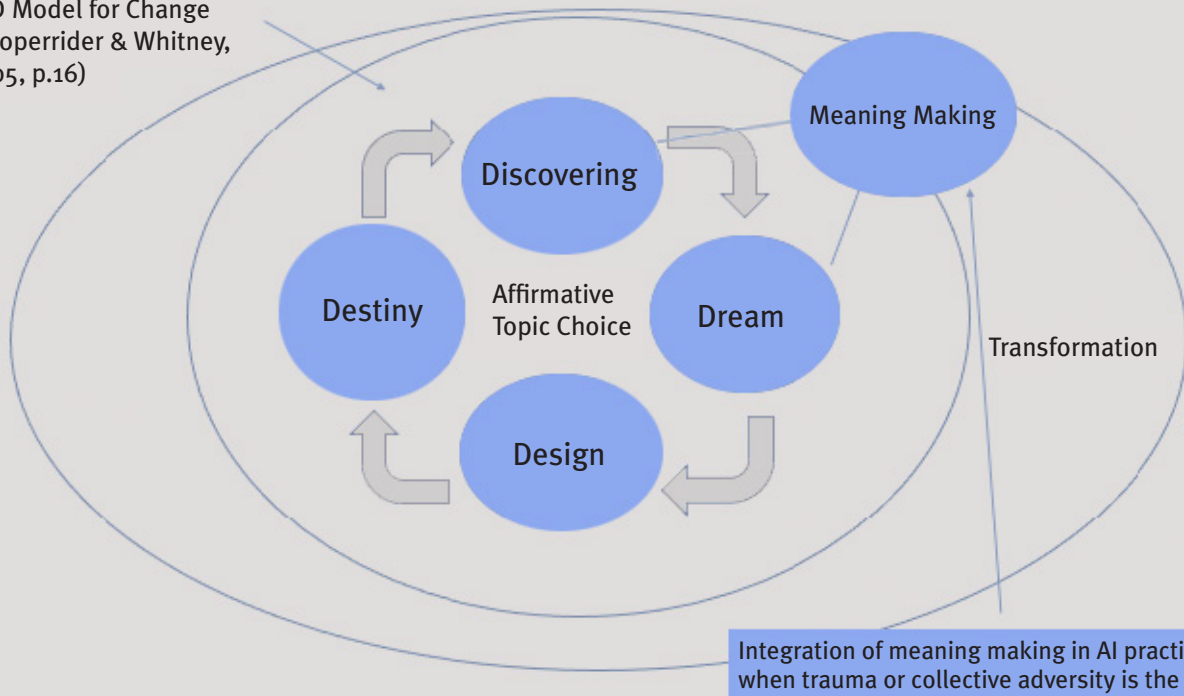


Figure 1. Appreciative Inquiry Model Adapted for Adversity and Trauma

learning (Destiny). This process is sometimes framed as a 5-D model, renaming the selection of the affirmative topic (Definition), but this article uses the original 4-D framework.

AI flips the paradigm from looking at problems to be solved to looking at what is working and what is possible. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) pointed out that when we study what is not working, such as low morale or poor performance, we will learn a great deal about these dynamics but are unlikely to learn much about what we are really interested in—high morale or high performance. The goal of AI is not to identify what is not working and try to eradicate it, but to uncover and support what is working and envision what is possible.

A core belief of AI is that how inquiry is conducted will define how change takes place. In other words, the ways in which we choose to ask questions influence the change that will be created. Questions that look for what is working are more likely to find positive paths forward; questions that focus on what is wrong are more likely to lead to a stuck process that finds more problems than solutions. Resting in

the problem may cause us to be stuck in the problem.

AI is a powerful process for organizational change that focuses on what is working, not what has gone wrong; it looks forward, not back. By contrast, the literature on PTG and collective trauma suggests that growth, healing, and forward movement come from fully acknowledging the traumatic experience and its profound effects, using methods specific to the posttrauma context, and creating narratives that reflect on the experience in detail. Given this, how is it possible to “do appreciative inquiry” in the context of adversity or trauma?

#### Theoretical Framework: Meaning Making

To be successful in the context of adversity or trauma, an organizational change process needs to include the factors that enable growth and recovery by acknowledging what has happened, while also detailing the steps to move forward. The AI model can integrate the findings of the PTG and collective trauma literature by incorporating an additional phase or

activity, early in the process: meaning making. Activities that allow participants to make meaning of their experiences, by working together in ways that reflect their specific context and allow for ownership and engagement, are the meeting place where the tension between looking back and moving forward can be resolved. Meaning making activities are both a way of acknowledging the experience of trauma or adversity and a type of inquiry that focuses on what is valued and leads to positive change. In other words, meaning making is not a way of staying stuck in what is broken but a way of moving through it toward positive transformation. Figure 1 reflects the existing 4-D AI model, but adds an intentional meaning making component to adapt the process for use with collective adversity or trauma.

In a collective setting, meaning making could include silent reflection, sharing of adverse experiences, powerful questions, generous listening, therapeutic writing, storytelling, and the arts. The use of meaning making activities in a real-world practice setting is detailed below.

Table 1. *Change Process for Successful Transformative Efforts at the Kalamazoo County Land Bank*

Phases	Activities	Outcomes
Understand	Define geographic focus area for discussion (gather information/ facts about current state, discuss opportunities and existing strengths providing context to the area of focus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defined focus for collective energy on a tangible effort</li> <li>• Collective knowledge on the area of focus—challenges and opportunities</li> </ul>
Make Meaning	Provide space for meaning making (collective sharing about why the project is important to those at the table, flexible & context-specific opportunities for meaning making and storytelling, acknowledgement of the difficult nature of the context, affirmation of conflicting emotions about the prospect of transformative change, and affirmation regarding feelings of loss associated with the property decline and abandonment crisis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased trust and confidence within collective group</li> <li>• Enhanced commitment to effort and sense of collective self-efficacy</li> <li>• Shared sense of ownership over the process, resulting from shared personal stories and attachments to the defined focus</li> </ul>
Dream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imagine multiple possibilities</li> <li>• Define desired and possible future state</li> <li>• Build and refine a collective vision</li> </ul>	Executable vision for a new reality desired by individuals impacted by the adversity
Design and Implement	Create a strategy and plan for implementation (identify needed resources, secure resources, create action plan, define accountabilities for elements of the plan, execute plan and vision)	Realization of this vision
Sustain and Steward	Ensure ongoing stewardship plans are in place, and/or create iterative processes of continued adaptation of the project sites as opportunities and needs present	An implemented vision that is sustainable and adaptable over time

### Meaning Making Activities in Field Practice

In 2010, I moved from the Chicago area back to my home state of Michigan to be a part of the economic recovery efforts associated with the Great Recession. Michigan held the highest unemployment rate in the country at that time. The state was experiencing rapid and alarming population loss in metropolitan areas—most notably in Detroit, but also in other post-industrial towns—and had some of the most striking rates of property abandonment and property blight in the nation. Many new agencies were being created across the state to re-purpose, renew, and reconnect abandoned and blighted properties; I moved back to Michigan to lead one of these, the newly established Kalamazoo County Land Bank.

Land banks are a nationwide phenomenon. They were crafted in large part by now-Congressman Dan Kildee and Professor Frank Alexander (Sam Nunn Professor of Law, Emeritus at Emory University). The 2003 legislation that enabled land banks to be established in Michigan, which was then

imitated across the country, created a local vehicle to repurpose abandoned property and change the trajectory of community decline. Congressman Kildee and Professor Alexander proposed that abandoned properties could be repurposed as community assets, via public holding and disposition entities. They and others at the time surmised that the arc of a community’s economic demise or stabilization, or even its resurgence, could be influenced by a process that allowed the community to take a deep breath, re-center, and identify new possibilities (Alexander, 2005).

#### Building a Vision

Our land bank included a visioning process in our work. This process included multiple sessions, open to neighborhood residents, to define the strengths and opportunities of the geographic site and surrounding area and to build a collective vision for moving forward. Facilitators and architects supported the sessions to document the work and build the vision with the participants, in an iterative process that led to a final endorsed idea of what was desired for the site. Over the last decade,

the agency has facilitated many community visioning processes associated with defunct property (Kalamazoo County Land Bank, 2020). Some of these exercises were small, while others were larger undertakings; no process was perfect, and each came with its fair share of missteps and mistakes. Overall, however, we learned that the change initiatives most likely to result in a successfully executed and implemented transformative effort were those that followed the change process described in *Table 1*.

#### Meaning Making

As seen in *Table 1*, we found that it was important to acknowledge the community trauma, as a precursor and a companion to the process of building visions and executing redevelopment. The projects that more frequently took life and were ultimately completed were those borne out of a facilitated change process with both visioning and meaning making as core components. By contrast, facilitated processes without these elements were less likely to be as successful. To reach implementation, each project required broad ownership among a large number of committed individuals



fulfilling different roles. Each project encountered stumbling blocks and unanticipated problems. The collective was more equipped to work through these challenges when they were acting together toward a shared purpose and when they felt a strong sense of attachment, which often arose out of meaning making activities. This meaning making process seemed to work together with the collective visioning process to bring projects to fruition, and as an additional benefit, it surfaced resident leadership and allowed local talent to contribute to collective efforts in unexpected ways.

The process we found associated with successful change initiatives, as described in Table 1, aligns well with the five enabling factors for Posttraumatic Growth named by Tedeschi (2020). In our change efforts, meaning making activities supported the act of *disclosure* (processing and reflecting on the “what” that has happened, acknowledging the adversity in order to process it, and be equipped to move through the experience productively). Our vision exercises focused on *narrative development* (beginning to articulate a new narrative that defines what the desired new state looks like). In retrospect, we did not spend much time on *emotional regulation* (the ability to manage anxiety, confusion, and other negative emotions and call on a recognition of existing resources and possibilities), but I believe our work could have supported this by incorporating mindfulness and self-compassion practices. As residents doing our vision exercises reflected on both existing strengths and ways the pre-crisis state had been disturbed, we collectively experienced *education* (the cognition that one’s core beliefs and assumptions have been disrupted). Finally, our change process efforts that took multiple years and united people under a sense of a shared purpose for a considerable amount of time, allowed them to act in *service* (engaging in work that is helpful to others). Taken together, these findings recall Tedeschi and Calhoun’s (2004) assertion that there is potential for positive changes to arise out of negative collective events, when individual narratives are integrated to create a social narrative that moves in the direction of collective transformation.

Our experience with change initiatives also reflects the findings of the collective trauma literature. Gilpin-Jackson’s (2014) discussion of resonance (the experience of positive transformation and learning from collective trauma achieved through a process of storytelling) and Saul’s (2014) discussion of collective healing (recovery through community-engaged, locally led, and contextually specific efforts including narration, and theater) are both directly aligned with two of our most successful change efforts. The first involved local participation in the international Inside Out project, which utilized vacant and community buildings to display canvases featuring oversized photos of neighborhood residents taken by a local photographer; this work was part of a ten-year effort to address blight and abandonment on a neighborhood commercial corridor. The second is described in detail below.

#### ***Eastside Voices***

The idea for this intergenerational oral history project, led by storytelling artists with longstanding ties to the neighborhood, came from the director of the local neighborhood association during a redevelopment process. The core concept was to share and honor the history of the neighborhood, in conjunction with a neighborhood-defined change effort that developed new housing on 11 parcels of vacant land where residential homes had been demolished due to blight and abandonment. Interviews with 17 individuals who had grown up in the neighborhood explored themes of neighborhood connection, race relations, and the evolution of the neighborhood over time, including loss of businesses due to economic downturns. Visual artists with connections to the neighborhood then utilized components from the oral history interviews to create both a temporary mural on a vacant building and a permanent art installation on the redeveloped site.

The effort resulted in a documentary and book now available at the local public library (Eastside Voices Oral History Project, 2019, 2020). Several of the artists who participated have come forward to collaborate with the agency and the neighborhood

on a subsequent poetry project, which is set to unfold this year and complement an additional community-defined redevelopment of a blighted space. These successes grew out of an organic and flexible process that invited the community to co-create meaning making opportunities together.

#### **Appreciative Inquiry in Practice**

The Kalamazoo County Land Bank had not been exposed to AI models, practices, and methods at the start of our work a decade ago. Therefore, AI was not formally used in the change processes implemented. However, a retrospective comparison between the 4-D AI model and the change process we developed at the land bank for successful projects reveals a striking congruence. Four of the five phases of our process described in Table 1, though articulated in slightly different terms, are remarkably similar to the four “D”s described in AI. However, the AI model lacks the meaning making component, supported by the PTG research, that we found was associated with successful implementation of our change efforts in the context of adversity.

Though we were unaware of AI as we developed our change process, we did have an intuitive sense that it was important to make meaning out of what was happening, to allow for collective grieving, collective celebration, and collective visioning. When we employed these practices, our initiatives were more likely to be completed and more likely to be embraced by the community. The potential for environments like ours—and for other communities experiencing collective adversity—to benefit from a trauma-informed AI model is significant.

AI has the potential to provide a context-specific and flexible space for processing crisis, trauma, and adversity by supporting and validating the emotions and loss associated with these experiences. Leaders in the AI space are currently engaging in dialogue about this potential. Cooperrider (2020) wrote that AI has the highest potential for impact in collective systems that have experienced trauma. The PTG and collective trauma literature (Gilpin-Jackson, 2014, 2020; Saul, 2014; Tedeschi et al., 2018) demonstrates how storytelling, narrative development, and

disclosure can help us develop strength from adversity and trauma. An example of this is provided in the documentary made from the oral history project in Kalamazoo (Eastside Voices Oral History Project, 2019). A resident tells a story about losing his family home, one of the homes that had been demolished over the years at the site of a new community-envisioned development, and shares his multi-dimensional emotions. While he is enthusiastic about the new change efforts, he is also experiencing feelings of loss for his family home. This story is not an either-or story but a yes-and story: yes, the development was defined and dreamed up by the community; yes, there was real loss, as his family home and a part of the neighborhood's history had been lost to demolition; and yes, it is appropriate to grieve what was lost while also celebrating what emerged.

In a recent article, Cooperrider and Fry (2020) stated the importance of recognizing that AI does not endeavor to only discuss the positive:

What we would like to underscore here is that AI is not about being or thinking positively or negatively. Its call is to transcend this polarity. It is not about positive versus negative human experience, but the choice to inquire into what is life. (p. 269)

Figure 2 depicts a further expanded change process model for trauma and adversity in which the original 4-D AI model, the key findings from the PTG and collective trauma literature, and the addition of meaning making combine to allow for transformational growth.

### Implications for Practice and Research

#### Practice

With the incorporation of meaning making, the 4-D AI model can be put into practice in a variety of trauma and adversity contexts. The following are four recommendations for successful implementation.

First, it is important to note that choosing which meaning making activity to pursue is less important than ensuring that facilitation is appropriate and context sensitive. In Kalamazoo, the storytelling effort



Figure 2. Trauma and Adversity Change Process for Transformative Growth

unfolded as a collective endeavor specific to a particular context, and the ideas arose from the community working together. Participants are unlikely to find value in a meaning making activity if it feels like it is prescribed to them or overlaid on their experience. All activities and exercises should be co-created by the participants and a trained facilitator, so that they are context specific and responsive to the needs and interests of the group. The outcome of this phase in the process is not about the product that is generated; rather, it is about the healing that can be supported.

Second, in many contexts, it will not be possible or appropriate to create an oral history project, art installation, or community theater activity. However, in most post-adversity settings—e.g., organizations bringing their teams back to work during pandemic recovery—there are plenty of simple and low-cost ways to create opportunities for meaning making activities. During work-sponsored activities, employees can easily be given time to share both their positive and negative experiences during the pandemic. These conversations can be components of larger conversations about how the organization may have struggled during the pandemic and what opportunities it may have in the future and therefore constitute a meaning making activity.

Third, there are a variety of existing organizations in the mindfulness/emotional intelligence space (such as the Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute) and the self-compassion space (such as the Center for Mindful Self-Compassion) offering exercises that could be helpful to

organizations in the context of trauma and adversity recovery. Facilitators skilled in mindfulness and trauma informed generous listening could help support healing and position organizations for growth. This work could be a helpful complement to an AI change process. The collective events of 2020 and 2021 have created an opportunity for organization development practitioners to fully realize this potential benefit and to tap into existing resources in the mindfulness and self-compassion field.

Finally, it is important to emphasize to participants that taking time for meaning making—through reflection, sharing, or storytelling—is not about focusing on what is wrong. Rather, this process allows the adversity to be recognized and provides space for affirmation and acknowledgment of the experiences and emotions it has evoked.

#### Future Research

There is strong demand for a better understanding of how to recover from trauma and adversity. Though the PTG literature focused on trauma at the individual level is well established, more research into trauma and adversity at the collective level is needed. In particular, other collective practices that have successfully led to positive transformation need to be better understood. Additionally, action research with organizations situated in a collective trauma environment could further investigate their needs and adapt these practices to be helpful to them. Action research inquiry among AI clients—who may now be struggling with a



collective experience of trauma or adversity, directly or indirectly related to the COVID-19 pandemic—could offer valuable lessons in how to further adapt AI practice. The change process this article has proposed, incorporating meaning making activities into the 4-D AI model to allow for posttraumatic growth and change, stands ready to be used in research and further adapted by communities and organizations facing trauma and adversity.

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