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UNSETTLING THE FAMILIAR: CHALLENGING DISCOURSES OF DEFICIT THROUGH THE HESITATION AND PAUSE OF AN APPRECIATIVE LENS

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Abstract

Whilst deficit discourses in classrooms and staffrooms are pervasive and dominant, there is some research which supports teachers disrupting deficit thinking and reconnecting with student "funds of knowledge". Processes for disrupting deficit knowledges tend to assume individual teacher construction of deficit views in conversation with other teachers, and include questioning and offering other metaphors to unsettle the familiar, in a space where new language about young people is engaged. Neoliberal thinking fosters a mechanistic, problem-based approach which positions teachers as transmitters of knowledge developed elsewhere, efficiently "delivering" enhanced student achievement. In this context, teachers are positioned as performers of *Standards* viewed largely through a lens of certain progression in relation to the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. Such certainty in the outcomes misrepresents the micro-interactions of identity and knowledge formation in classrooms. Such a conception of teachers' work fosters deficit thinking about both students and teachers.

This paper examines both the development of a process for and the results of an appreciative self-appraisal of a teacher's practice. The process illustrates that challenging deficit thinking, may be possible through an appreciative lens which provides both the "hesitation in friendship" and active "pause" in thought in a space for a disruption in self-assurance long enough to find an alternate way to speak to and about students and to come to understand the world differently. An appreciative lens becomes one element in a repertoire of activities which might assist with thinking outside the discourses in which we live in order to imagine schools with classrooms "full of human knowledge" which arise through creating spaces for learning "where identity, intellect, and imagination are negotiated between teachers and students" (Cummins, 2003, p. 58).

Introduction

In 1916 Dewey (1966) asked: "Why is it... that [if] teaching by pouring in, learning by passive absorption, are universally condemned, that they are still entrenched in practice?" (p. 38). Almost one hundred years later, classroom observations still identify, the dominant mode of teaching as being focused on transmission of content (Lingard, 2007; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). In their research, McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) refer to this dominant pattern of teaching practice as "enacting traditions" (p. 19), where the "logic of practice" casts the teacher as 'expert' and student as recipient of knowledge in which there is a "best" way of teaching and it "doesn't matter who the students are" (p. 20). Teachers operating from this logic tend to see students "primarily in terms of deficiencies in their performance ... and define relationships with them accordingly" (p. 20), positioning themselves as transmitters of required content and 'gap-fillers' in student knowledge and skills. Understanding students as "deficient" then frames the patterns of classroom practice (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).

Normalisation and exclusion are deeply embedded in the everyday practices of contemporary, mainstream schooling (Ball, 2013, p. 115) and are actually gaining ground in contemporary thought and practice, being characterised by a mix of three models—genetic pathology thesis; the culture of poverty model and the cultural and accumulated environmental deficit model—previously identified as dominant in certain periods of time in the nineteenth and twentieth century (Valencia & Solórzano, 1997, pp. 160, 198).

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It can be argued that normalisation and exclusion are elements of dominant discursive practices which have "come to be" (Veyne, 2010, p. 14) over time in ways that make it hard to step back and think differently. Discourses escape our notice. Each one of us can think only as people think in our own era.

> In every age, contemporaries are trapped in 'discourses' as if in a deceptively transparent glass bowl, unaware of what those glass bowls are and even that they are there. (p. 14).

In every period the discourses of the time are taken to be true. "In this way, truth is reduced to *telling the truth*, to saying whatever conforms with what is accepted as the truth" (p. 14) and truth becomes "that invisible part, that unthought thought" (p. 21) in our everyday practices. Pearl (1997) points out that since deficit thinking is so deeply embedded in every aspect of our lives, it is "difficult to recognize" and seems like the 'natural order' (p. 211). We live in times where "neoconservatism in national and state politics is quick to blame the victim" (Valencia & Pearl, 1997, p. 251). As Peter McInerney (2007) identifies, with the loss of social justice in educational policy discourse, "socially produced disadvantage ... is now being constructed around individual deficits, rather than structural inequalities" (p. 83).

Santoro (2013) argues that the increasing cultural diversity in schools puts pressure on teachers because they "feel unconfident and under-prepared to teach students whose cultural values and beliefs are different from the dominant cultural majority" (p. 311). Nayler and Keddie (2007) argue that "despite growing levels of diversity ... inclusivity in pedagogy remains very limited" (p. 201). Valencia and Solórzano (1997) conclude that it is unlikely that deficit thinking will be a source of workable interventions or solutions for education to be more equitable (p. 199). So, given the pervasiveness of deficit discourses in classrooms and staffrooms (Comber & Kamler, 2004) how do we challenge the thinking to support teachers to enact "culturally responsive pedagogy" (Santoro, 2013) which we might imagine works against exclusion and deficit thinking?

There are some ideas suggested in the research literature, for challenging deficit thinking which include supporting teachers disrupt deficit thinking through questioning and offering other metaphors (Kamler & Comber, 2005) or funds of knowledge and narrative identity work (Hattam & Prosser, 2008). Nayler and Keddie (2007) suggest that teacher interrogation of practice and the understandings that make possible pedagogies of social justice "lie in [teacher] ... capacity to examine critically the social processes and discourses that shape their ways of teaching and their students' ways of learning" (p. 212). Such a critical interrogation of practice is argued by the authors to be "the crucial first step in teachers' focused gaze in identifying, questioning and re-imagining the enduring but often taken-for-granted inequities that continue to characterize schooling contexts" (p. 212). Such critical interrogation is also assumed by others as being the process of change (Hattam & Prosser, 2008; Kamler & Comber, 2005). Are we then asking teachers to think differently within the same discourses in which deficit and exclusion are located?

Our reliance on problem-solving as an approach to change can "engender deficit-based thinking on the part of the educator" (Giles & Kung, 2010, p. 309). We argue, in this paper, that prior to or at least in parallel to such an interrogation of practice, is an understanding of how to be appreciative of strengths, skills and the learning unfolding (Grenier, 2010, p. 396) since an appreciative stance is outside the discourse of deficit (Hammond, 2013) and therefore might jolt us "out of the narrative of ... unfolding plans" which unsettles "our self-assurance in what we know" (Sellar, 2012, p. 61). Such an experience might also help us develop a language with which to speak in alternate ways about students (Humphry, 2014).

In this paper we firstly examine our reliance on problem-solving as an approach to change. We then, explore how appreciative inquiry can be employed to provide the conditions for teachers thinking outside of the taken-for-granted problem solving mode. We suggest a role that Appreciate Inquiry might play in creating a space for "hesitating in friendship" (Sellar, 2012) or what Kaufman (2001) describes as "intellectual hospitality", combined with the silence of the "active and complex work" in finding *other* "uncommon ways to talk about students" (Humphry, 2014, p. 492) through identifying

positive experiences.

Our reliance of problem-solving

The pervasiveness and resistance to challenge, of deficit discourses, as outlined by Valencia and Solórzano (1997), might be understood as manifesting the difficulty we have in thinking outside the traditional approach to change which "is to look for the problem, do a diagnosis, and find a solution" (Hammond, 2013, p. 5). Bacchi (2010) identifies this "hegemonic" 'problem-solving' paradigm as one which "assumes that 'problems' are readily identifiable and objective in nature" (p. 1) and is gaining in strength in many Western states, including the European Union and international organisations such as the World Health Organisation. The idea of 'problem solving' "creates the impression that societies are generally functioning well and, hence, that not much needs to change" (Bacchi, 2009, p. xvi). 'Problems' thus identified, are seen as sources of trouble to otherwise smoothly functioning organisations or society, so the aim is to make things work better, by eliminating the problem. Central to such an approach is an implicit "problematization" (Bacchi, 2009, 2010)—a representation which embeds deficit thought. Bacchi (2007) points to the importance of reflecting on the ways in which policy "problems" are represented because they have a range of ethical implications "in terms of people's sense of self-worth, their participation in democratic decision-making, and their ability to live full and meaningful lives" (p. 5).

The discourse of problem-solving also creates the 'problem-solving' political subject (Bacchi, 2009, p. 233), who focuses on 'what works', which provides a link to the idea of evidence-based policy. Both assume that policy-making is a rational, decision-making process in which there are links between "auditing, monitoring, performance measurement, strategic planning, best practice, risk management and quality management systems (Bacchi, 2010, p. 9). "Evidence-based policy relies upon ... accepting the possibility of direct access to 'reality'" (p. 9) where the 'problems' being 'addressed' are readily identifiable and uncontroversial—all we need to do is 'solve' them" to find *what works* (p. 9).

Intervention and diagnosis

Experts who diagnose a problem deploy their expert knowledge (humans sciences) "to construct truths about the subject who is brought into their gaze, who is thus *known* through the methods of observation, testing, appraisal" (Ball, 2013, p. 13). The subject is made *visible* through techniques of power, but power is rendered invisible, through the focus on the techniques or standards by which the subject is assessed (p. 48). These knowledges produce "classes and categories of subjects, endowed with specific characteristics and requiring particular forms of intervention" (p. 13) and the assignment of exercises for improvement (Devine-Eller, 2004, p. 6). An ordering of subjects is produced through comparison of subjects with each other. "Differential patterns of achievement are "explained" by deficits of aspiration or lack of parental control, or "natural" inequalities" (Ball, 2013, p. 98). In response, policy and research construct "objects of knowledge and subjects of intervention" (p. 98). Students are subject to "interventions that are designed to "fix and repair" divergence from the norms of pacing of knowledge" (p. 100).

Given the unfamiliarity of many teachers with students' cultural contexts, there is a risk that teachers reduce cultural complexity to an *essence* and simplify what they see to recognizable and generalisable traits. Essentialisation of culture can mean that teachers come to know students as the *exotic other* or the *deficit other* (Santoro, 2009, p. 36). Teachers who know students as the *deficit other*, draw upon "negative stereotypes of students' cultures ... [and] often focus on what they think students don't know in comparison to students from the dominant culture" (Santoro, 2013, p. 315).

Deficit thinking is a problem representation which sets people "in opposition to each other" (Bacchi, 2009, p. 16), being used as a technology of governing for "maintaining order within populations" (p. 30)—a dynamic which Foucault (2000) calls "dividing practices" (p. 327) as an exercise of power in

which "some act on others" (p. 340). Examples include: "unemployed *versus* employed ... 'binge drinkers' versus 'socially responsible drinkers'" (Bacchi, 2009, p. 16), "the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy" (Foucault, 2000, p. 326), or those students "ahead" with others "behind" (Ball, 2013, p. 49).

Such representations of 'problems' have embedded implications about who is responsible for the 'problem'. Being positioned as the 'problem' has lived effects *in the real* (Bacchi, 2009) by being treated in certain ways which may cause harm. Being positioned as the person defining the 'problem' implies the provision of a 'solution' which is dependent on the compliance of the 'other' with the way the situation is defined and a change on their part within the existing rules. The discursive effects of the "dividing practices" which includes the problematizations of fault and responsibility for defect, belonging to 'others', makes it difficult to think differently, and outside of the representation. Rose and Miller (1992) identify the role that problem representations have in "making up" the citizens who are part of the operations of power in imposing constraints upon other citizens (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 272).

In the next section, we explore how Appreciative Inquiry might be employed to provide the conditions for thinking outside the presumptions of the problematization of deficit and therefore to be able to adopt an appreciative stance to the examination of teacher practice. We acknowledge that much Appreciative Inquiry literature focuses on a corporate organisational context, but in this paper we will be focusing on a process of *Appreciative Appraisal*, incorporated by Professor David Giles, into the Masters in Education (Leadership and Management) course developed at Flinders University in order to apply principles of Appreciative Inquiry specifically to the field of education.

The area of focus of *Appreciative Appraisal* is the individual, not the organisation as a whole (although this does not preclude its use with a larger group). Appreciative Appraisal (AA) is a method by which the principles of Appreciative Inquiry can be used to enable an individual to embark on a process of self-understanding and self-development. Reflective and dialogic in nature, an Appreciative Appraisal is a journey undertaken by the individual and a 'critical friend'; the aim of which is to identify strengths in the individual's practice and, subsequently, draw out the values and motivators implied through this process.

We start the next section with a brief overview of Appreciative Inquiry and then describe an appraisal journey engaged in by one of our authors. Following that, we provide a theorisation of the appraisal journey to understand the opportunities it provides for thinking outside deficit discourse. We identify that an appreciative stance enables two key outcomes. Firstly, it provides a context for thinking differently in the context of an unsettling of the taken-for-granted, forcing us to "reappraise the world and make sense anew" (Sellar, 2012, p. 62). Secondly, it provides opportunities to draw on language that describes "young people in positive ways" by using overtly positive language which represents young people and teachers differently (Humphry, 2014, p. 493). Instead of repeating the deficit terms commonly used and contributing to the dominance of them, positive language fills the space of the "omissions and evasions" (Simpson & Lewis, 2005, p. 1261) of a privileged and deficit interpretation.

Appreciative Inquiry—A different way of thinking

The keystone of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is that organisations are "human social systems, sources of unlimited relational capacity, created and lived in language" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, pp. 1-2). Organisations consist of people working together in ways which generate some "high moments" which can be identified so that "people know how to repeat their success" (Hammond, 2013, p. 6). The cycle of inquiry is repeated "to keep learning" (p. 6).

> The appreciative process is summed up as 'stalking' the life-centric flow within an individual's past experiences which leads to an 'amplification through fanning' of the elements that have contributed to the exemplary or peak performance (English et al. 2003) (Giles & Kung, 2010, p. 312)

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AI allows for imagining what it would be like if the "best of what is" occurred more frequently and what resources would be needed for this to occur (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Some distinct features of Appreciative Inquiry compared to deficit thinking are shown below.

Table 1:

	Appreciative Inquiry	*Deficit Thinking*
Method	Generative Inquiry	Problem solving
Drive	Boundary spanning	Gap closing
Focus	What is best	What is wrong
Tactical Objective	Enable success	Prevent failure, fix problems
Actors	Whole systems	Varies, isolated entities
Guiding Paradigm	Voluntaristic	Mainly deterministic

(Kelly, 2010, p. 166)

Patton (2003) identifies ten situations which are *good candidates* for Appreciative Inquiry, with two of them being: when dialogue is needed and when there is a desire to build a community of practice. Both are easily applicable to an examination of teaching practice.

The AI process is usually described as a 4-D cycle: Discovery; Dream: Design: Destiny (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003), with the process beginning with a thoughtful identification of what is to be studied (Lewis, Passmore, & Cantore, 2011). Hammond (2013) incorporates the first process of identification of purpose in a stage called Define and then adds the other four to describe a 5-D cycle. Chapman and Giles (2009) suggest that it is helpful to work with a 'critical friend' in the identification and articulation of emergent themes. In the situation which is the focus of the paper, the focus of the appraisal is a particular teacher's practice. We describe each of the following four stages by looking at AI and then the adaptation for an AA focus

In the discovery stage of AI, participants recall motivating moments of success from the past creating a new energy that is positive and synergistic (Lewis et al., 2011). It is the energy created in this stage which is different from the other change approaches. The discovery stage is grounded in actual experiences of individuals, which results in rich descriptions of actual practices. In the AA approach, the individual identifies at least six 'high points' in their professional career. The individual writes a narrative of at least 300 words for each narrative, encapsulating their experience. The participating author gathered data for the narratives using the reflective journals used during teaching practice of her bachelor's degree and personal reflections gathered from dialogues with colleagues, students and supervising lecturers. The data for the 'discovery' phase of the AI was written in the form of six narratives, each of about 250 words.

The Dream stage in AI uses the stories from the discovery step to elicit themes that underlie the times when the participant was most 'successful' and engaged (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008). In AA the 'critical friend' considers the six narratives, identifying some common themes, whilst also identifying values. A process of dialogue between the participant and the critical friend then helps consolidate an understanding of the key themes and values which identify the individual's passion and strengths. Giles and Kung (2010) suggest that the 'critical friend' is someone "with whom a trusting relationship exists" who "must ... be skillful and seeking taken-for-granted aspects of another's stories" (p. 311).

The Design stage in AI draws together the themes to create provocative propositions that describe the

ideal situation, written as inspiring or aspirational statements in affirmative language. In AA the themes identified were explained in some detail to identify the aspiration. A selection is included below.

> Teaching is a special calling, a deep calling and a serious matter. Teaching is my passion and being in a classroom gives me supreme joy. Moreover, the needs of my students are of utmost importance to me … The second theme … was my appreciation and understanding that teaching can involve difficult contexts. I had an understanding that each teaching context is a new adventure, and while we have maps that guide our journey such as text books and syllabus, the terrain of the adventure cannot be totally predicted … The third theme drew upon my unquenchable desire for autonomy and creativity. I generate creative tasks to engage and hook students. The fourth theme … is my need for collaboration to bring creative twists to the lessons … When teachers go on their own ways it creates burn out … Collegial support is critical because it makes teaching a school endeavour rather than a single teacher endeavour … The fifth theme … as a curriculum leader, I am motivated to bring changes 'in the way'... because changing the way is very different from changing a few ideas – it is transforming. Educational transformations would be most successful when intellect, emotion and spirit are regarded as interwoven in education. The proper balance between these qualities is what produces good teachers. (Mariyam)

The five aspirational statements in AA were identified as:

1. I consider teaching to be a special, deep calling and a serious matter
2. I understand teaching involves difficult contexts
3. I create creative tasks to engage and hook students to their learning
4. I work collaboratively to enable a creative twist in teaching and learning
5. I am motivated to bring changes in the way teachers behave.

In AI, the Destiny stage articulates the possibilities and may involve specific steps in an action plan which can be undertaken to build these understandings into her/his ongoing professional life. In AA each aspiration is considered in terms of the action that would be necessary to enable further 'life-giving' professional moments. Ten actions were identified including for example: "Find ways to keep my generative disposition and to stay on the cutting edge". The author involved, recorded her own thoughts at the time:

> Until I discovered AI last year I was someone who focused on the problems. As a student I can recall spending most of my energy and time on the subject I am weakest at. As a teacher, I always looked for the reasons for my students' failures and exhorted to find solutions for that.

For the author involved in the journey:

> This AI into myself helped me focus on what needs to be preserved in my "creativity" ... This exercise leaves me more motivated and energised than I have ever imagined possible.

Theorising the use of an appreciative stance: the hesitation and the pause

The experience of the author throughout the AA process involved moments of hesitation when different ways of thinking were needed. The writing of six narratives which focused on high points in teacher practice, was difficult for someone focused on problems and their identification. Working with a critical friend to identify positive themes opened up a space of un-ease or discomfort—thinking about success as a teacher meant thinking about successful experiences with students and the relational nature of that. In trying to do that, the 'shock' arose in discovering the completely taken-for-granted nature of the assumption that teachers were expected to diagnose learning problems, identify activities and intervene for those students left "behind" (Ball, 2013, p. 49) and therefore use terms which were more likely to identify what was *missing* in the student rather than what they were *bringing* to the situation. The 'shock' of discovering the assumed focus on 'lack' was one of a short, temporary silence in stumbling over positive ways of describing teaching through looking at strengths rather than gaps.

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Sellar (2012) identifies that "feelings of hesitation can unsettle our self-assurance in what we know, activating new problematics" and that friendship provides the conditions which spur creative thought. Both of these elements are present in Appreciative Appraisal. Sellar (2012) argues for the idea that "destabilisation of knowledge about ourselves and our worlds might provoke learning, in response to problems that are newly sensed in hesitation" (p. 61). The hesitation breaks down our habitual patterns of cognition, our assumption about what will follow, forcing us to deliberate and analyse what is happening (Varela, 1992).

> There is a potentiating dynamic at work in events of hesitation, from which either pedagogical transformation or a reinforcement of established understandings might follow. This dynamic suspends the narrative line of our conscious experience, problematising the ways things are while activating the potential for them to become otherwise. (Sellar, 2012, pp. 62-63)

For teachers, the hesitation has a dual nature—a focus on self, and a focus on 'the student'. An element of the unsettling of self-assurance (Sellar, 2012) which is a part of *being* a teacher involves the recognition that ongoing self-judgement about what it is to be a *good* teacher is expected and always initiates and re-initiates a pre-occupation with what needs to improve, and the self-judgement comes to define not only the teacher but also the students. As a teacher judges themselves through gaps between everyday practice and the imagined *good* teacher, embedded within the judgement is the identification of gaps between behaviour and the imagined *good* student. In trying to be more effective, neoliberal policy seeks to find ways to govern populations better (Ball, 2013). Current governing practices position teachers in the midst of neoliberal thinking which is always about 'investment' in 'what is lacking', through training to maximise potential and investment. In each moment of thinking about their own *performance* as a teacher, normalising judgement about themselves and their students is ever-present. Santoro (2013) suggests that, in addressing questions about *who* it is that teachers must know, the question of *who* it is that is *doing* the knowing is most often neglected (p. 316). Knowing others requires that teachers understand themselves as encultured, exploring how their membership of "the dominant cultural majority shapes their teaching selves, their classroom practices, their relationships with students ... and their expectations of these students" (p. 316). Goodwin (2010) refers to this as personal/autobiographical knowledge which enables teachers to understand that the way they teach is as much about preservice learning and 'on the job' learning as it is about their own "biographies, hopes and aspirations" that shape their work (p. 317). Hesitating in friendship (with a critical friend) might present different possibilities for transformation by creating a space of inquiry long enough to "come to understand the world differently" (Sellar, 2012, p. 62) and to open up the possibility of appreciating the strengths rather than the 'failures'. The presence of the critical friend is important here, to sustain the focus on life-giving experiences and high moments of teaching rather than to quickly move to the greater comfort of identifying what to improve.

Humphry (2014) points to the dual role of hesitation or silence in both reinforcing and contesting deficit language. The "dominance of deficit can be seen through educators having at hand a number of commonly used and understood educational terms based in deficit knowledges" (p. 492) such as—behaviour problems, ADHD, abusive, at risk, disadvantaged. Humphry (2014) identifies hesitation in an instant of silence which she calls a "pause". The silence provides both "a space to challenge the truth of a deficit discourse and ... a signal of something to come" (p. 485). The "pause" allows time for a different 'truth' to be accessed, and is therefore a space where "active and complex work was being done" (p. 485) in finding different ways of speaking about experiences. Silence constitutes a powerful tactic within both a dominant discourse to maintain dominance, and a resisting discourse to challenge dominance (p. 492). Challenging the deficit dominance draws on "language that described the young people in positive ways" (p. 493). Such "alternate discourse takes time to access – hence ‘the pause’" (p. 497).

What we understand by this is that stepping outside the dominant ways of thinking from a problem-solving and deficit focus, means thinking about oneself as a teacher differently and also relationships with students and other teachers. We agree with Cummins (2003), that pedagogies are about identity as well as knowledge: identity of students as learners and identity of teachers as facilitators of such a

space for micro-interactions of hope. In thinking about how our pedagogies are shaping what students think of themselves as learners, the hopefulness of understanding classrooms as "full of human knowledge" (Cummins, 2003, p. 58) is also reflected in teachers working collaboratively towards the formation of a living philosophy of education enacted in *appreciative* interactions with both teachers and students.

Increasingly schooling has been infused "by a psychology fixated with the individual and individual difference, both normalization and pathologization, and realized within a set of ... normative practices" (Ball, 2013, p. 52). Whilst the school functions thereby as a sorting device, the methods become invisible:

> individuals come to believe that they sort themselves, or that they are sorted by 'nature'... the power of the school is revealed not in its ability to force students to do things, but in its ability to sort or arrange students in ways that the students themselves (and parents) ... think is logical or fair. (Devine-Eller, 2004, p. 19)

The methods are also largely invisible to teachers and leaders, who incorporate into their thinking, the taken for granted *essentialisation* of culture as *deficit other* (Santoro, 2009, p. 36). Normalisation and exclusion are deeply embedded in the everyday practices of contemporary, mainstream schooling (Ball, 2013, p. 115). School is both "a normalizing and excluding machine" (pp. 116-117) and teachers are operators in this, seemingly convinced by the 'naturalness' of the school as sorting machine (Devine-Eller, 2004).

An appreciative process such as AA, creates the conditions for a *hesitation* in friendship (Sellar, 2012) and an instant of *active pause*, which allows for a different 'truth' to be accessed (Humphry, 2014, p. 485)

Conclusion

Histories of education in almost all countries, reveal a process whereby the way education is governed constructs "the human differences that children bring to school—differences in race, class, culture, gender, language—as deficits that are invoked as explanations of these children's poor academic performance" (Cummins, 2003, p. 41). The dominance of neoliberal thinking in how change in education is conceived, fosters a mechanistic, problem-based approach which positions teachers as transmitters of knowledge developed elsewhere, efficiently "delivering" enhanced student achievement. Such a conception of teachers' work fosters deficit thinking about both students and teachers.

We have offered the possibility of working with teachers to develop a dialogic space with an appreciative lens through the use of *Appreciative Inquiry* in the form of what David Giles refers to as *Appreciative Appraisal*. Challenging deficit thinking, may be possible through an appreciative lens which provides both the "hesitation in friendship" and active "pause" in thought in a space for a disruption in self-assurance long enough to find an alternate way to speak to and about students and to come to understand the world differently. An appreciative lens becomes one element in a repertoire of activities which might assist with thinking outside the discourses in which we live in order to imagine schools with classrooms "full of human knowledge" which arise through creating spaces for learning "where identity, intellect, and imagination are negotiated between teachers and students" (Cummins, 2003, p. 58).

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