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The Twenty-First Delphine Hanna Commemorative Lecture 2012

Positive Perspectives on the Profession: Reframing through Appreciative Inquiry

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Change theories and Organization Development strategies have long followed the problem-solving approach of looking at organizations, identifying the weaknesses and introducing interventions to “stop doing the wrong things.” In its simplest form, this approach has been successful in a variety of situations and has a popular following. Consultants or internal reviewers look for the problems, identify the cause of the problem, and introduce the intervention (new rule) to eliminate the opportunity for the repetition of the “problem.” Problem-solving is a popular perspective through which change is initiated in politics, academia, and in social media. Eliminate the “bad” and pay attention to what we have been doing wrong to improve. This article first reviews the problems posed in past Hanna lectures to some major themes: (a) the need to address societal concerns, (b) the need to reduce sub-disciplinary fragmentation, (c) the problems inherent on university campuses as a result of politics and the economy, (d) the need to re-examine the over-reliance on the scientific research paradigm at the cost of phenomenological understandings, and (e) the framing of problems to be solved by professionals in our field. The introduction of Appreciative Inquiry and is then provided as an alternative approach to examine current contextual setting with the primary emphasis away from “What problems are you having?” and toward “What is working around here?”. This alternative suggests that in all organizations there is some positive force that is moving the organization forward, and the identification of that force (what works) can lay the groundwork for doing more of “what works.” Finally, three examples of Appreciative Inquiry opportunities in action from our discipline are offered for consideration.

Keywords Appreciative inquiry, Change theory, Organizational Development

I have had the privilege of studying the past 20 Delphine Hanna lectures and have enjoyed following the trends and issues that have been discussed since the inception of the lecture at National Association for Physical Education in Higher Education (NAPEHE) conferences in 1992. It has been an incredibly enlightening process and this body of lectures has provided me with a wealth of insights. In the process, I have come to appreciate the thinking and planning that precedes an opportunity such as this presentation. Each lecturer has taken the time to lay out the groundwork that supports the contributions Delphine

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Hanna has made to our profession, our respective disciplines and sub-disciplines, and our professional associations. The impact of her work is intertwined with every aspect of our collective being and can be felt as noted by John Burt (1998) when he reminded us of her words “. . . if my work was worthy, it is still in progress.” We are well aware of her humble words, but Burt reminded us that . . .

“[We] are survivors of Delphine Hanna and of her students: Thomas Wood, Luther Gullick, Fred Leonard, Jesse Fering Williams, and Jay B. Nash. It would be outrageous of you not to guarantee that their work ‘remains in progress’” . . . these early leaders knew “. . . empirically that physical activity had the power to elevate, they—through their own powers of persuasion—opened the doors to higher education for all of you.” (p. 85)

We all bear the weight of this responsibility in our professional lives.

As I continued to think about this lecture I looked for stories about those that thought, dreamed, and imagined in their professional lives. One particular interesting story follows the challenges presented to Robert Goddard. In 1920, Robert Goddard was an innovative physicist committed to pursuing his dream of designing rockets powered by liquid fuels. Despite heated controversy and public ridicule from the media during his research career in the 20s, 30s, and 40s, Goddard is now recognized as one of the founding fathers of rocketry—in advance of the actual space travel experimentation. His approach to pursuing his dream was conceptualized early, and his quotes are frequently used as motivational prompts for those who approach change from a differing perspective:

[J]ust as in the sciences we have learned that we are too ignorant safely to pronounce anything impossible, so for the individual, since we cannot know just what are his limitations, we can hardly say with certainty that anything is necessarily within or beyond his grasp. Each must remember that no one can predict to what heights of wealth, fame, or usefulness he may rise until he has honestly endeavored, and he should derive courage from the fact that all sciences have been, at some time, in the same condition as he, and that it has often proved true that the dream of yesterday is the hope of today and the reality of tomorrow (From his high school graduation oration, “On Taking Things for Granted,” June 1904). (Lehman, 1963, p. 16)

It is the reference to *hope* that I found so appealing as I began to think about the relation of kinesiology as a field and the professional associations that support the work of professionals. Later, Goddard, despite the continued assault on his research and publications by media outlets and scientific experts, maintained his use of the word *hope* in this shorter quote, “It is difficult to say what is impossible, for the dream of yesterday is the hope of today and the reality of tomorrow” (Lehman, 1963). Undaunted by his critics, he became more secretive and began to work in a more secure environment and collected a small group of trusted colleagues that he felt would maintain the integrity of his hopes and dreams. His critics became more daunting in their comments and Goddard became more defensive in his responses, but in his responses there remained a connection to his perspective on dreams, hopes, and realities, as noted below:

“Every vision is a joke until the first man accomplishes it; once realized, it becomes commonplace.” Response to a reporter’s question following criticism in *The New York Times*, 192. (Lehman, p. 16)

The journey from dream to hope to reality still exists today for individuals as well as organizations. When do we change? Why do we change? And how does that change become operationalized? Change theories and Organization Development strategies have long followed the problem-solving approach of looking at organizations, identifying the weaknesses and introducing interventions to “stop doing the wrong things.” In its simplest form, this approach has been successful in a variety of situations and has a popular following. Consultants or internal reviewers look for the problems, identify the cause of the problem, and introduce the intervention (new rule) to eliminate the opportunity for the repetition of the “problem.” The focus on the negative has everyone looking for the “bad” in the situation and usually results in organizational units “pointing fingers” at other units within the organization as the “reason for the problem.”

Problem-solving is a popular perspective through which change is initiated in politics, academia, and in social media. Eliminate the “bad” and pay attention to what we have been doing wrong to improve. If we just did “less of something” then we would be better situated. In my review of the former Hanna lectures I found a trend that first asked “where are we?” and then ended with a positive charge of how to think, move, live, and even dance in the future (e.g., Hawkins, 2011 reference to . . . “what if the Hokey Pokey is what it’s really all about?”). Across the lectures is a common starting point that effectively identifies our problems. The problems cluster around some major themes: (a) the need to address societal concerns, (b) the need to reduce sub-disciplinary fragmentation, (c) the problems inherent on university campuses as a result of politics and the economy, (d) the need to re-examine the over-reliance on the scientific research paradigm at the cost of phenomenological understandings, and strangely enough, (e) the framing of problems to be solved by professionals in our field, exactly what I was trying to avoid—problem solving. I believed that they had identified every possible problem, so I would need a different approach for my lecture. With that in mind, I have divided this article into three sections: (1) a retrospective review of the problems noted by past Hanna lecturers—the “dreams of yesterday,” (2) an alternative approach to examining our current contextual setting and planning for the future—“hopes for today,” and (3) examples of positive framing for the future—“the realities of tomorrow.” The first section contains many references to the wise counsel of past lecturers and I have taken this opportunity to reconnect with their thoughts and words to clarify those “dreams of yesterday” that have paved our way to the “realities of tomorrow.”

Dreams of Yesterday

Past Problem #1—Problem-Solving

Let me take you back to how our scholars have framed the problems they saw as most critical. George Sage (1993) presented the first Hanna lecture at NAPEHE and suggested the following:

Definitions and proposed trajectories of a new world order need to be *problematized* to provide impetus for transcending the classroom, the gymnasium, the department chair’s and dean’s office, and for becoming involved in constructing our society for the future. By emphasizing the socially constructed nature of, and hence the need to make problematic what is taken for granted, the possibility for alternatives in the wider society will be opened up. (p. 152)

Sage then moved us through a compelling discourse that ended with a reference to a highly respected social scientist, Raymond Williams, and included this quote intended to move us from problem-solving to hope for a better future . . .

It is only in a shared belief and an insistence that there are practical alternatives that the balance of forces and chances begin to alter. Once the inevitabilities are challenged, we begin gathering our resources for a journey of hope. (p. 268 in Williams; p. 162 in Sage)

Chuck Corbin (1993) referred to the conversations we had as an emerging field/discipline/profession and how those conversations contributed to the current situation as reactions to the identification of problems. He then set a challenge to move us in the right direction. “We got where we are as we both reacted to criticism and conformed to university concepts of centrality” (p. 546). He expanded on that and noted:

. . . the need for physical education to have a sound body of knowledge as a requirement for being considered a profession. I, like so many others, was no doubt influenced by James Bryant Conant’s (1959) comments that physical education represented the worst of what was wrong with graduate programs in American universities. (p. 548)

Corbin concluded with the optimistic advice that we become the Renaissance field of the 21st century and to do so required that “. . . we must learn from our past and commit ourselves to a cooperative future” (p. 555), again that notion that we can be better if we could not repeat the mistakes of the past. Linda Bunker (1994) called attention to the problems in the field, emphasized concerns with “problems” and guided her audience to consider the options available through change.

. . . we have been regularly admonished to pay attention to the “*problems*” rather than the possibilities. True, problems help us identify solutions, but they can limit our thinking. Individuals who focus on the problems see only the negative: “winners see what they want to happen, loser what they fear might happen. . . .” Do you see the struggles and challenges of our society today and of physical education as problems or possibilities? Do you *choose* to nurture or feed the opportunities and starve the problems? (p. 460)

The identified problem solving approach changed in 2005, when John Charles suggested we need to be better prepared for the 21st century, and think differently about how to solve the pressing problems that would confront our students.

Preparation for what? The future is strangely unpredictable and the part of prophecy is perilously problematic. Even so, we owe it to our students to squint into the crystal ball, to try to foretell our future, to predict as clearly as possible the most prosperous path to follow. . . . Rather than basing professional preparation on past and current paradigms, we should intensify our efforts to anticipate future changes, challenges, and opportunities. (p. 269)

Charles was keenly aware of the political landscape that threatened institutions of higher education, and called our attention to the internal conflicts that continued to dominate our

conversations, “. . . As the Darwinian struggle for legitimacy continues in the politically charged atmosphere of higher education, some programs and perspectives flourish while others languish on the periphery” (p. 270). His suggested approach rested in “scenario planning,” a strategy designed to test ideas and plans well in advance of implementation. He argued for scenario planning as a viable change to the current methods of implementing change, “. . . Scenario planning is a tried and true approach used in the business world by many modern companies to prepare an effective strategy for dealing with the vicissitudes of corporate existence” (p. 271).

In 2006, Scott Kretchmar started us off with the reminder, “One of the greatest challenges we face in kinesiology is changing behavior” (p. 345). He was emphatic that problems are a necessary component of progress toward the good life when he stated, “. . . The good life must be a meaningful life, and meaning emerges from solving problems, not from eating Twinkies, nor from plucking diamonds from trees in Utopia, nor from doing just anything one wants” (p. 352). He contended that problems and problem-solving are integral to our growth

But I am suggesting that our field needs to be focused on challenges, Biology teaches us that problems are good things—or more precisely, just-right problems are good things. They are good things for our cells and systems. And they are good things for us as people. We know this all too well because we frequently grow bored in the absence of just-right problems (p. 351). We have problem solving hands, eyes, legs, ears, torsos, and brains. We employ symbol systems to solve problems. We study and use means-ends relationships to solve problems. We are without a doubt the best problem-solving prowess, we earned, took, or were given (depending on one’s point of view) dominion over the earth. We were raised on problems. We have survived because we have solved a series of problems. (p. 352)

Kretchmar’s suggested solution involved the consideration of a different perspective from which to view our passion,

If, as biology informs us, commitment, patience, and persistence are needed to grow muscles, perhaps they are also needed to grow players and playgrounds. It might be more useful, in other words, to think of our students less as players by birthright and more as play-prone individuals who need to be cultivated. And it might be more useful to think of playgrounds, not so much as locations that are found but environments that are grown. (p. 350)

Past Problem #2—Research Paradigms and the Effect on the Field

Of interest to many of the NAPEHE/NAKPEHEars, the research paradigm and its impact on the field generated the most discussion across the Hanna lectures. Topics ranged from a call to reexamine the over-reliance on scientific paradigms that ignore phenomenological understandings of human movement to strong arguments for interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary/cross-disciplinary research designs to best address the problems inherent in our field. Linda Bunker (1994) was the first lecturer to centralize this concern when she stated:

The profession of physical education must refocus on the centrality of the study of human movement. Physical educators have too long diluted the basic field rather than emphasize the common mission of understanding human movement and the contribution it makes to human physical and mental health. (p. 457)

In 1995, Linda Bain challenged the audience to think about the dominance of kinesiology scholarship based in the scientific method and therefore the lack of kinesiology scholarship focused on subjective knowledge. She explored the lack of research related to “peak performance” and referenced the thoughts of McInman and Grove (1991) who noted “. . . the academic domain of peak moments in sport has largely been untapped. Their elusiveness and qualitative nature are probably the two most important reasons for their unpopularity as a research topic” (p. 348) and then followed with “. . . however, despite the growing acceptance of qualitative research, subjective knowledge seems to have a marginal position within the field” (p. 243). She implored us to think about the problem in terms of a much needed solution, “. . . what is needed is a systematic, program-wide commitment to balancing scientific and subjective knowledge” (p. 248) in the way we prepare professionals for our related fields and then referred to her own university setting:

. . . despite a number of promising efforts to encourage reflection, most students graduating from the program are firmly grounded in a scientific perspective of the field, and only a few have a comparable appreciation for subjective knowledge. Few, if any, would have any idea about how to incorporate reflection and subjective knowing into their professional practice. The other reality is that it is increasingly difficult to recruit faculty members who have a conceptual understanding of kinesiology based on the meaning and significance of movement. (p. 248)

The attention to the research strategy continued in 1996, when Joy DeSensi reminded us to remain open to the phenomenological understandings of movement that Linda Bain offered in the 1995 Hanna Lecture. She concluded with her hope that:

. . . we see that the personal meaning in movement is not limited to one domain. Meanings do not occupy single spaces, but are interrelated and interdependent; so must we be. Each of us in our focused areas must allow for personal subjective meaning to hold value and incorporate it into our teaching and research, and provide a path for the truly multidisciplinary nature of movement. (pp. 528–529)

In 2000, Seymour Kleinman called attention to his continual professional battles to position “movement” as central in the dialogues that raged during the disciplines’ most “compartmentalizing” times of fragmentation.

I took this initial plunge into the shark-infested waters of academia. . . . I was ready to do battle against those advancing armies of exercise physiologists, sport psychologists and sociologists, sport and game theorists and practitioners, and yes even those behavior modifying teacher educators. . . . In particular, I was on the warpath against the materialists and behaviorists. (p. 91)

Jan Rintala (2002) called into play the notion of dualism in our research conversations and examined the philosophy of medicine as a parallel paradigm. The stark comparison of the physician's lack of connection to patients is daunting, ". . . Yet many physicians are becoming aware that something is amiss in the practice of medicine, and it has nothing to do with things like managed health care. It has to do with the field and the physicians losing touch with the people they are trying to help" (p. 4). The comparison continued in her thoughts on how both professions look at the body as an object—and the notion of dualism,

The vast majority of this knowledge however, is about the body as object, people in general, or about a social setting—not about individual people at all. . . . I'm wondering what would happen if we balanced all of this with the awareness that people in movement are experiencing subjectively as embodied beings. (p. 15)

Rintala reminded us of the importance of the work we do with our students at the university and that they need the knowledge, skills, and dispositions associated with an understanding of the body as more than an object—and charged us with the responsibility to ensure the students understand the importance of this shift in approaching the movement professions.

So what might our practice look like if we operated under the assumption that people are embodied and if we rejected the dualism that has prioritized rational objectivity over subjectivity? How might it impact our own interactions and activities, as well as the ways in which we seek to prepare our students for their future work in the movement professions? Since our students will be working more directly than we may with people in their play, game, sport, dance, and exercise activities, their understanding of these concepts and practices is also crucial. (p. 16)

In 2008, Ann Boyce welcomed us with the words that echoed past Hanna lecturers and talked about the research perspectives that have guided us,

I have endeavored to read, study, and think about the issues that challenge us—not only as kinesiologists but also as academicians (page 186). . . . Previous Hanna lecturers have pointed to the overdependence on the scientific end of the continuum as a threat to the balance between profession and the disciplinary knowledge areas. This imbalance has caused fragmentation in our field, which has not been beneficial for most of us. (p. 188)

Karen DePauw (2010) made a strong case for the value of interdisciplinary research models when she stated:

The wicked problems of society are indeed complex (e.g., sustainability, energy, health, poverty) and what is needed is an interdisciplinary perspective. No one discipline will be able to solve the complex problems and therefore it is critical that colleges and universities actively encourage and empower interdisciplinary research and education. (p. 345)

The concern with subdisciplinary fragmentation was noted in many lectures but stood as a central component of Linda Bunker's lecture (1994) when she noted,

he broad set of interests and subspecialties within physical education is also a danger—unstable and subject to “dis-integration.” When physical education splintered off into subdisciplines, it left multiple, separate structures built on quicksand rather than an integrated profession with spires of excellence or a high rise built on a solid foundation. Perhaps a lesson from the corporate world would be helpful: Are we a group of subsidiaries to be bought out by (or sold to) the highest bidder, or a strong corporation with many viable divisions, all contributing to the overall goal (P. Kellers, personal communication, November 23, 1993)? (p. 458)

In 2004, Virginia Overdorf reminded us that “we seem to be at another crossroads in our discipline, with a pathway begging to be followed. . . . There certainly has never been a more opportune time for the multifarious contributions our profession has to offer, and I am convinced that this dialogue must take place across subdiscipline lines” (pp. 244–245) and then she set out to identify her priority problems.

Approaches to solving problems require interdisciplinary endeavors, and it is my firm belief that our profession has suffered from a dearth of collective research efforts even across our own subdisciplines. . . . I also believe that we have not updated our campus-wide courses to include the importance of physical activity in solving societal programs. Meanwhile, more than 50% of our population continues to avoid exercise like the plague. (p. 246)

Past Problem #3—Societal Problems and the Role of our Field

Many of our scholars used the Hanna lecture as an opportunity to confront current societal problems and suggested potential solutions that professionals could implement to be the “variable that matters.” To help us focus on a most pressing problem in 1997, John Burt created a lively professional exchange between “Kinesiology” (K) and a “critic” (Conference Theme—CT) where the CT exhorts K to become a main player in the solution of society's most pressing *problems* (p. 81). He referred to John Dewey's claims that real advances in knowledge stem from a focus on the central problems of society, “. . . If we would teach our students to care about important social problems, and think about them rigorously, then clearly our institutions of learning must set high example in the conduct of their own affairs” (p. 81). In speaking through the voice of CT he outlined the five most pressing problems that K could address. “Thus, two courses of action seem reasonable: (a) join forces with other faculty to promote a return to the humanistic mission, and (b) try to articulate your contributions to the solution of societal problems in such a way as to make them egoistic for your university” (p. 84). CT was committed to the stance that K could confront the following societal problems and make the world a better place: (1) Premature Death; (2) The Search for Agent Blue (depression); (3) The Search for Subjective Well-being; (4) The Compression of Morbidity; and (5) Violence. His closing was reminiscent of a Mission Impossible directive—“Your job—should you decide to assist—is to find ways to effect change, ways to initiate and sustain concepts of a meaningful future” (p. 95).

In 1998, Doris Corbett called attention to the societal *problems* related to diversity issues. Her call rallied the field to look to physical education and sport as a vehicle to focus on civility and inclusiveness and thereby reconcile the chasm she identified in our society.

I have begun to think in non-conforming ways, and I have concluded that many of the institutions of Higher learning in the United States have misplaced their resources as they strive to adapt to new human resource challenges We should focus on the characteristics that people in an organization have in common, or “progressive diversity” . . . [which is defined as] bringing together individuals who appear different but who have many common characteristics. (p. 311)

Corbett’s most enlightening plea called for the collaborative binding of professions in an effort to look for our common-ness “ . . . Whereas diversity focuses on characteristics that make people different (e.g., race, gender, religion, age, ethnicity, and so forth), civility looks for characteristics that we all have in common (Graham, 1997)” (p. 315).

In 2000, Sharon Shields looked at the problems inherent in our universities and our movement toward “the common good.” She asked us to “ . . . frame once again your thinking to include issues of empowerment, social participation, the common good, civility, and social justice” (p. 312). She called for a focus on the university environment as she identified the problem to be examined,

First I would like for us to examine our classrooms from the standpoint of who gets in and who is left out. If the university is a gateway to success, a key to opportunity, a place of education, change, and transformation, then why have we not opened the doors of our classrooms to more of our children? Why are some left out?... I would like to explore what happens to those who come into our academies. Do we perpetuate a cycle of elitism or do we change and intercept that cycle with a commitment to diversity, social justice, social participation, and empowerment. (p. 299)

Shields reminded us that “ . . . Dewey felt that students learn best not by sitting in a closed room, but by opening the doors and windows of experience to the *problems* that surround us” (p. 307) and then called on us to look for the solution as follows:

I wish to propose that we put an end to many of the social injustices that we witness. You may say, this is a noble goal indeed but how do you propose we do this. . . . I propose that we begin to examine ourselves, our teachings, and our own commitments to these issues of diversity, civility, and social justice. What changes can we each affect when it comes to admissions, mentoring of students, teaching through our classes and our relationship with students, these values and concepts, moving them in service-learning and experiential education. (p. 308)

In 2003, Robert Pangrazi clearly identified the health-related problems associated with a lack of physical activity and advocated for quality physical education programs in all schools. He reminded us that “ . . . Many of America’s schools do not value physical education and do little to assure that all youth receive daily physical education instruction” (p. 107). He also emphasized the need for open communication and sharing between the

professionals that work at the three different schools levels to ensure that a quality program is in place across the entire school career for children,

An issue that frequently arises in K–12 physical education programs is that there are three distinct and usually unrelated curriculums [elementary, middle school, and high school]. . . . Teachers at each of these levels seldom meet and discuss program content and expectations. . . . So the focus here is to identify why each of the three levels has such different goals and to help all physical educators see the need for working together to enhance the profession. (p. 111)

Virginia Overdorf identified her most pressing problems in 2004,

The indolent society in which our young people are being raised is an issue of concern. The inactivity that is rampant among our youth must be offset by good school programs; however, the programs that are being offered in our public schools are falling short on contact time in physical activity, a fact we have known for a long time. . . . Moreover, literature on obesity indicates that our programs are somehow failing to reach important outcomes. Students are not being engaged in lifestyles that include sufficient levels of physical activity. . . . In my opinion we face a political/media awareness problem as well. (p. 249)

Ann Boyce (2008) shared questions of diversity, an aging professoriate, negative environments for junior faculty, divisive agendas within the field, and the human condition as continued problems, and referred to the suggestions proposed by Doris Corbett when she referred to “progressive diversity,” and a focus on commonalities (e.g., shared visions, similar interests, common values, and goals) instead of issues that polarize us. She called for a more collaborative and civil environment when she stated, “I firmly believe that unless we figure out a way to work with each other and show that we substantially contribute to the university and to society as a whole, then we are at risk” (p. 193).

In 2009, John Dunn reminded us that “the current economic crisis is real and the implications on all of society, including its social institutions such as schools and universities, are substantive” (p. 271). He encouraged us to focus on redefining ourselves as an inclusive profession—paying attention to racial/ethnic demographic shifts, financial constraints on students, accountability and transparency, and calling for a recommitment to higher standards related to civility and respect,

One of the major challenges facing all of society is the issue of civility and respect, or as some might say, “What happened to basic courtesy?” . . . there is ample room within our departmental and college structures to review again our commitment to acknowledge one another, to listen carefully, to respond respectfully, and, in disagreement, to focus on the issue and avoid personal attack and confrontation. (p. 276)

Putting our concern with societal issues at the forefront occurred again when Andrew Hawkins (2011) confronted us with the most difficult of all problems. . . . What if the hokey pokey is really what it’s all about?

Past Problem #4—Leadership

Our scholars also wove the topic of leadership throughout their lectures and called attention to the recurring need to position the association in the forefront of all discussions regarding our field. Two scholars (Sparks, 2001; Metzler, 2007) focused on leadership and the problems presented to current leaders. In 2001, William Sparks called our attention to the problems inherent in leadership when he argued “that leadership based on an ethical and a moral base is essential as society changes, and we are challenged by issues reflective of the new millennium” (p. 508). He noted that capable leaders were critical at that time in history when he said, “. . . it is essential that as we continue our movement forward into this new century, leaders provide a vision and a sense of purpose in assisting peoples of the world to live in harmony with their fellow man and with their environment” (p. 509). He highlighted the need for principled leaders who are ethical as they face the “dilemma de jour” and the demands of today’s ever-changing landscape. He alerted us to the fact that “. . . [leaders] face constraints of two kinds. They face conflict within their own culture and conflicts between opposing cultures” (p. 511). His description of the changing landscape brings into focus the trend that:

. . . History has shown us that leaders will fabricate crises at times when their leadership is challenged. . . . Leaders derive their basic character from culturally induced dilemmas. Oftentimes, leaders find themselves in situations where they must make critical decisions that force them to choose between competing ways of life. (p. 514)

In 2007, Mike Metzler wondered where the next generation of leaders would come from and highlighted the positive impact of earlier professional pioneers on the field. Rather than look for problems and make suggestions—he asked that we look at those modern day pioneers and *DO MORE OF WHAT THEY ARE DOING*. Aha, I found that to be an interesting approach to set the tone for my lecture.

Summary

So what I have I learned in my study of the past lectures—certainly that everyone should take this journey to reconnect with the words of our best thinkers. In those words, each reader will find segments of wisdom that can be used to adjust your personal thinking and understandings. In 2010, Karen DePauw referred to Delphine Hanna as follows “Born in the mid-19th century, Delphine Hanna (1854–1941) understood possibility or rather that nothing was impossible. She pushed boundaries and sought opportunities through her professional life” (p. 337). Therein lies the manner by which I feel most connected to Delphine Hanna—a belief in possibility and a rejection of the notion of ‘impossible.’ This reference to understanding possibilities and rejecting the notion of impossible brought me back to a connection with Robert Goddard. DePauw celebrated Hanna’s positive approach when she stated that “Hanna gave us an example of one who journeyed across dimensions (education, medicine, leisure, health, social concerns) and created realities through possibilities and opportunities” (p. 338). Hanna’s journey across those dimensions positioned her as an interdisciplinary pioneer and able to address our current challenges. This truly influenced my thinking about the manner by which we conceptualize our future.

In 2002, Jan Rintala repeated the annual mantra “. . . ‘I have nothing in common with Delphine Hanna.’ I reject that notion, as well as all the other lecturers’ suggestion that

they were not on a par with Delphine. In time, future scholars will consider the lecturers as contextual leaders. I would argue that Appreciative Inquiry would task us with aligning the positive contributions of those past lecturers and “do more of it” and thereby avoid noting why we are not similar to Delphine and move right to the good stuff . . . what we do that is “great” and how can we do more of it?

Hopes for Today: Re-framing through Appreciative Inquiry

If my goal is to work from the positive side of the conversation, the half-full glass so to speak, and focus on pockets of excellence and innovations that have proven successful, my energies will not be exerted on the identification of problems. Think about the relatively successful innovations that you have observed in your work place or in our field over the last two years. Have you personally initiated an innovation and spurred positive growth and new energy? Or, have you intervened to stop a problem? Many may counter that this is just a matter of semantics, but I think there is more to this than just words. I suggest that others consider the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) strategy as a possible approach to work in kinesiology and within the broader higher education community. AI is offered as an alternative to current problem-focused inquiry methods that ask “*What problems are you having?*” and instead asks “*What is working around here?*” (Ludema, 2001). This alternative suggests that in all organizations there is some positive force that is moving the organization forward, and the identification of that force (what works) can lay the ground work for doing more of “what works.” Appreciative inquiry requires that we pose positive questions about those aspects of an organization that raise-up and sustain the life of that organization.

Collectively seeking “what works” in an organization results in a set of organizational goals based on past successes—collective successes set the direction for future efforts when members of the organization repeat the patterns/procedures that led to the original success. Members of the organization use the repeated patterns to relive the positive emotions and build new positive memories that become the corner post of the current initiative—similar to athletes repeating successful motor skill patterns based on knowledge of results.

The effort needs to be made to use an AI approach when examining organizations in contrast to looking for all that is “wrong” (Hammond, 1998). In corporate environments, executives need to remind workers that AI approaches are not based on just “patting each other on the back,” and certainly not by responding to customer satisfaction surveys that report 90% positive results with follow up on the 10% that are unhappy. Why not interview the happy 90% to identify why they are happy? We stand as examples of that very process. When we worry about membership levels we survey individuals who have NOT renewed their membership. When do we survey those that HAVE renewed their membership to find out what we ARE doing that makes them come back each year?

We have all had years of practice in the art of problem-solving but we have relatively little experience in looking for what works and finding ways to do more of what works; we seem obsessed with learning from our mistakes. Why not allow our successes to multiply and crowd out the unsuccessful?

Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) crafted the initial writings that opened the discussion regarding AI. AI calls for modes of inquiry that uncover the “ordinary beauty, and real possibility of organizational life” (p. 165) and help scholars and practitioners to “shape the social world according to their own imaginative and moral purposes” (p. 161). Weick (1982) appeals for an affirmative approach to social science that creates compelling images of human possibility and seeks to discover examples in the “real world.” This continued

focus on the positive aspects of organizational life and the positive possibilities for the future bind the members of the organization together as they collaboratively dream and create the future (Dauenhauer, 1986). How could we find a better example than the gathering at NAKPEHE conferences and the rejuvenated spirit that follows us home from the conference?

Organizations and their members create their future by posing positive questions to drive the development of theories about the most effective directions for future efforts. It is the Anticipatory Principle—the image of the future that guides the current behavior of any organism or organization, that continues to propel organizational change in the most positive of all directions. These hopeful images of the future, in turn, become powerful catalysts for change and transformation by mobilizing the moral, social, and relational energies needed to translate vision into reality and belief into practice (Ludema, 2001).

Organizations create their own realities through positive imagery conveyed in symbolic and mental processes, setting expectations that can align collaborative forces to bring the future powerfully into the present as a causal agent,

. . . Projected images, as reflected in positive belief in the efficacy of a remedy, ignite a healing response that can be every bit as powerful as conventional therapy. Future-creating, mental activism is that artful creation of positive imagery on a collective basis that may well be the most prolific activity that individuals and organization can engage in if their aim is to help bring to fruition a positive and humanly significant future. (Cooperrider, 2000, p. 88)

Cooperrider (2000) continues to describe organizations as products of the affirmative mind that need less fixing (problem-solving) and more re-affirmation (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools is a “re-affirmation” process) as the fuel to building a better future for the collective whole. The positive imagination of the members should be innovative in nature and not conceived as wild dreams, but as anticipatory realities.

Positive imagery is popular in the health care system as an effective approach for connecting the physical healing system of the body to the mental belief system (Cousins, 1983). Positive imagery can spur the physical body into a self-healing mode; and the effects can be even more powerful when the positive belief is shared within a group. The positive image as related to self-conceptions is evidenced in the Pygmalion effect whereby performance and self-image beliefs of an individual change as a result of the perceptions of others. When a positive image of an individual is presented we tend to remember the successes over the failures and assign positive values to situations that may be more ambiguous in nature. The individual begins to respond in line with the positive image that others have of them.

We are each made and imagined in the eyes of one another. There is an utter inseparability of the individual from the social context and history of the projective process. The positive image plants a seed that redirects the mind of the perceiver to think about and see the other with affirmative eyes. (Cooperrider, 2000, p. 76)

Is it possible for people to develop their capacity to choose positive rather than negative perceptions of the world? Is it possible to adjust after being in negative situations for much of the formative years? Fritz (1984) reports that many children spend their formative years in a home environment where as much as 90% of the conversations are negative (what not

to do, how bad things are, what was done wrong, who is to blame). As educators we clearly understand that growth occurs with greater intensity through successive approximations and the positive feedback provided in a learning environment. An optimistic view can be linked to the notion that “human systems have an observable tendency to evolve in the direction of those positive images that are the brightest and boldest, most illuminating and promising” (Cooperrider, 2000). Surely we want children to move in the direction of promise and possibilities. Just as surely we want our colleagues, our professional associations, and our field to do likewise.

One of the more popular areas of positive imagery is evident in the sport performance areas where amateur and professional athletes are “programmed” to focus positive results during the performance of a motor skill. The athletes are encouraged to repeat positive phrases intended to help them visualize and repeat successful attempts. This approach emphasizes an important distinction between negative affirmations and positive affirmations, as Jack Nicklaus in *Golf My Way* reminded readers to repeat the positive affirmation of “I’m going to hit it right down the middle of the fairway” rather than the negative affirmation of “don’t hit it into the trees.” The use of positive affirmation can be practiced and integrated into any skill attempt. Such affirmative competence—the capacity to project and affirm an ideal image as if it has already occurred and now exists (Cooperrider, 2000)—proves far more effective than a focus on the elimination of failures (negative self-monitoring).

Appreciative Inquiry can be used as an alternative approach to the Organizational Change and Development strategies based on problem-solving and “deficit-finding,” a sort of *diagnostic* Organizational Development approach. The reorientation toward “finding the positive” suggests that we not look for *interventions* to “solve a problem” but look to *innovations* to create a better future design. Innovation-inspired Positive Organizational Development has become a discussion topic as institutions and organizations look to recreate themselves as *Positive Institutions* (institutions that elevate and connect human strengths (Cooperrider & Godwin, 2011)). The intent is to encourage collaborative innovations rather than interventions so that individuals become committed to innovations that they helped to create. This approach avoids looking to just fix problems and instead focuses on looking for things that are already good—and making them better through the creation of collaborative innovations.

For years, those in counseling and the “helping professions” have referred to this approach as “Strength-based” counseling with the focus on building upon the strengths of the individual. This moves the counseling dyad in the direction of amplifying the strengths over weaknesses. The professional seeks information about strengths and focuses on maximizing those strengths. As a broader application, we can look to the *Principles of Strengths-based approaches to Positive Organizational Development and Change* (Cooperrider & Godwin, 2011) in the following list.

1. We live in worlds our inquiries create; no change initiative outperforms its “return on attention” whether we are studying deficiencies or the best in life.
2. We excel only by amplifying strengths, never by simply fixing weaknesses; therefore, beware of the negativity bias of first framing because excellence is not the opposite of failure.
3. Small shifts make seismic differences; strengths-based change obeys a tipping point; instead of focusing 80% on what’s not working and 20% on strengths it is important to put this 80/20 rule in reverse to harness the transformative power of the “positivity ratio.”

4. Strengths do more than perform, they transform—strengths are what make us feel stronger therefore magnify “what is best” and imagine “what is next” in order to create upward spirals.
5. We live in a universe of strengths—the wider the lens, the better the view. The appreciable world is so much larger than our normal appreciative eye. What we appreciate (seeing value) appreciates (increases in value).

Item #1 brings us back to the starting point . . . we will find what we are looking for. If we ask students to identify the weaknesses—we will get exactly what we are looking for—a list of negative statements or the “bad” in the setting. If we ask the student to improve the situation, or fix the problems—the student complies with this deficit-seeking task, and everything becomes riddled with negative overtones. However, if we ask the student to identify the strengths of a particular school—the list takes an entirely different direction—and so does the perspective of the student and the school under consideration.

Realities of Tomorrow

What if we begin to look for the strengths in our field, rather than our problems? What a different set of conversations we will have at our conferences. Where are our strengths, our successes, our points of pride—and how do we get our colleagues to do “more of that” rather than point out the problems that need to be solved? The process begins with searching for the evident strengths in people and the profession, talking to others about what is working, identifying pockets of excellence—not errors or deficits, and then using that information to plan for collaborative innovations. Peter Drucker (1966) suggests that the task of leadership is to create an alignment of strengths in ways that make a system, or an organization, or an individual’s weaknesses irrelevant. Perhaps we need a counter attack on the consultant’s use of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats analysis and instead use a Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results analysis to form the basis for future growth and innovations? To focus on the positive, I’d like to share three short descriptions of possible strengths.

Let’s start with NAKPEHE. Big things are coming because of positive thinkers—*design thinkers* who are not worried about making mistakes or constraints—but see opportunities for innovations. With encouragement from NAKPEHE past presidents, Mike Metzler and Ron Feingold successfully launched a collaborative national conference with support from several disciplinary professional associations. The association leaders met this past summer to discuss how we could come together to tell our “collective story” in a manner that supported all of our efforts and specialization areas. This summit focused on the positive forces that each association could contribute to that process and the energy that could be created by planning collaboratively for the future—a synergistic event that would encourage the transdisciplinary work that has become more popular in recent years.

The summit participants prepared by studying a set of common readings before they met for two days of sharing, positive thinking, strength identification, and collaboration. At the conclusion of the summit, the representatives of the professional associations agreed to support a “collaborative conference” with active participation from all of the professional associations as a means of strengthening our collective field. The success of this initial summit and the collaborative innovative energy resulted from an approach that avoided “fault finding,” “deficit identification,” or “talking about the problems we need to solve.” The success was clearly based on the notion that “we can make something new that will serve us all.” We look forward to participating in this successful innovation in 2013.

John Charles (2005) also made an early call for such uniting of the professional associations:

[W]e, the members of NAKPEHE, assume a collective responsibility for leading our field through the changes that are to come and for responding to the challenges that will arise. We are a “big picture” organization, maybe the only group equipped to focus on global issues as we define the role of our field in the 21st century. We should gather together tomorrow’s leaders, make connections with the world, and develop an intellectual and professional network within the academy. (p. 284)

My second example is the work of Dr. Robert Melillo (2009) with programs designed to enhance motoric, cognitive and nutritional behaviors as a pathway to address functional disconnection syndrome (FDS) and its impact on other neural behavior disorders (Asperger’s, ADHA, autism, etc.). Melillo has established more than 55 Brain Balance Activity Centers across the United States to support children with those clinical diagnoses and assist parents through the utilization of physical activity skills, the development of cognitive processing strategies, and the implementation of improved nutritional plans. Melillo’s work began in response to requests from parents to help with children who had been diagnosed with autism, ADHA, and Asperger’s and prescribed a lifetime of medications. Parents were hesitant to administer medications that would mask the symptoms but not address the causes, although realizing there was no apparent “cure.” The parents saw some immediate results in response to the motoric manipulations at the chiropractic office—and Melillo became more focused on the development of motoric manipulations that stimulated the hemisphere of the brain associated with the clinical diagnosis. The positive responses continued and Melillo eventually broadened his efforts and created centers across the country to reach as many families as possible. He authored the book, *Disconnected Kids* in hopes of providing support for parents who could not attend the centers.

His work focuses on hemispheric imbalance and over-stimulating the weaker hemisphere through sensory motor (large/gross/fine/auditory/sensory) activities. The final goal is to have both hemispheres balanced and functioning at the same developmental level. The sensory motor activities are paired with cognitive activities to strengthen academic skills and aligned with a nutritional plan. More than 2,000 children have successfully moved through programs at Brain Balance Activity Centers in the past 5 years. His recent work reported success in improving academic and cognitive performance of children who exhibited symptoms of neurobehavioral disorders (ADD and ADHD). I have great hope for this innovation as a strength that aligns with our work in other areas of kinesiology-related investigations.

My final example is based on the current work of Darla Castelli and Charles Hillman regarding the connection between brain activity levels and physical activity levels. In 2003, a psychophysicologist (Hillman) approached a pedagogy specialist (Castelli) to apply research suggesting that regular physical activity enhanced cognitive performance in older adults, to other stages of the lifespan. Of particular interest were the effects of physical activity on brain development when the prefrontal cortex was still under refinement. Since that time, this transdisciplinary collaboration has led to a line of research that has been bench to backyard and back again. Coupling basic neurologic research with authentic child-like participation in physical activity, Hillman and Castelli have confirmed that physical

fitness has effects on cognitive performance in children similar to those for young adults (Hillman, Castelli, & Buck, 2005). Children who had higher cardiorespiratory endurance had faster reaction time and greater accuracy on cognitive tasks (Hillman, Castelli, Buck, 2005; Hillman et al., 2009; Buck, Hillman, & Castelli, 2008; Pontifex et al., 2011; Kamijo, Khan, et al., 2011) than their unfit counterparts. When fit children were compared to young adults, who are considered to be at the end of the developmental phase and at their cognitive peak, the performance accuracy was the same for stimulus-response computer tasks requiring participants to identify an object in relation to other stimuli. Since these early works this research team has found that: (a) physical fitness affects cognitive performance, (b) an acute (or single) bout of physical activity influences the working memory and attentional resources, and (c) underlying mechanisms associated with body fat inhibit cognitive performance.

This research collaboration led to the development of the FIT Kids program, an after-school physical activity intervention, and has been shown to improve cardiorespiratory fitness (Kamijo, Khan, et al., 2011). Further analyses demonstrated that working memory and inhibitory control are contributors to academic achievement (Hillman et al., 2012), thus sanctioning the translation of laboratory protocols to educational settings. This four-year study suggests that children who meet or exceed the physical activity guidelines of 60-minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day, have better academic achievement and better cognitive control than children who do not meet these guidelines.

Today, the collaboration continues on a quest to determine the underlying mechanisms and causal chain of cardiometabolic factors that affect cognitive performance. Early research indicates that 50% of children tested, ages 7–11, have at least one risk factor associated with metabolic disease (i.e., elevated blood glucose, elevated blood lipids, hypertension, reduced cardiorespiratory function) (Parret et al., 2011; Valentine et al., 2010; Brothers et al., 2011). Early findings from these studies suggest that the storage of body fat may actually be inhibiting cognitive performance. Accordingly, if *Exercise is Medicine*, the research team would like to identify the ideal *dose* of physical activity that will reverse the negative effects of cardiometabolic factors, before children fall too far behind. Scott Kretchmar's statement, "One of our greatest challenges we face in kinesiology is changing behaviors" (p. 345), holds true here. When children enter kindergarten overweight and unfit, they are already behind their peers who are of normal weight and regularly physically active, and at a higher risk for disease. It is prudent to focus on the benefits of physical activity on cognitive health (Hillman et al., 2012; Kamijo, Pontifex, et al., 2011), as poor physical health may inhibit learning.

As Linda Bunker suggested, "physical education must refocus on the centrality of the study of human movement. Physical educators have too long diluted the field rather than emphasize the common mission of understanding human movement and the contribution it makes to human physical and mental health" (p. 457). Today, the survival of physical education pedagogy is centered on pedagogy specialists and teacher educators' receptivity to the three T's: (a) transdisciplinary research, (b) team science, and (c) translational research. Collaboration strengthens the research team, increasing the likelihood of securing external funding, and expediting the development of effective interventions that directly impact children's physical activity and fitness.

In closing, I have a strong notion that if we all focused on strengths and made a concerted effort to recognize the strengths in our environments, colleagues, and the field—the possibilities would be unlimited. There would be multiple opportunities for exciting innovations and positive synergy at every meeting on campus, every discussion

between colleagues, and every conference presentation. I encourage everyone to engage in conversations of hope and appreciative inquiry by focusing on the best in a situation as opposed to the worst.

If we can truly work from a perspective of the “Correct Questions” (those that are positive) we can avoid the “Incorrect Questions—IQs” (those that are negative and not productive) as John Miller (2004) described in his book, *QBQ! The Question Behind the Question*. The simple act of asking a “positively-oriented” question can move an entire dialogue in the direction of growth and innovation. In every conversation there is a critical moment when we choose which question to ask—that critical moment when we decide to ask Correct Questions or Incorrect Questions (as defined by Miller, 2004) holds the power to re-frame our thoughts, our work, and our lives.

Perhaps some readers will re-frame themselves and focus on aligning strengths in any context to improve the situation. Perhaps we think of this as *Branding*—an identifier that causes an individual to be associated with a group. I remember several years ago, when I still worked in a teacher preparation program, engaging in a discussion with a school administrator about our recent graduates. He and I agreed that there was a discernible quality in the teachers who finished our program and it was obvious to anyone who walked into a gymnasium where alumni were teaching. He noted that our teachers talked differently, behaved differently, and cared differently than other teachers he had hired—he was sure he could identify our graduates simply by watching/listening to the lesson. Those graduates were branded. Similar to joining a team, a professional association, or a political party and taking on an “identity” as a member of that group . . . when you take an Appreciative Inquiry perspective, you commit yourself to the important work that you will do in any context that will thrive from an identification of strengths . . . you assume an identity and from that day forward you will be “branded” as one of the most important people in the room, a National Association for Kinesiology in Higher Education Appreciative Inquirer.

I leave you with the thought that we have heard the “dreams of yesterday”—those problems and solutions shared by past Hanna lecturers, we are now in position to understand the “hopes we have today” and with a few minor adjustments in our approach to innovations, we can shape the “realities of tomorrow” in a most positive perspective.

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