

Appreciative Inquiry and My Workplace Learning

For my research topic, I chose David Cooperrider's Theory of Appreciative Inquiry because it closely aligns with what I learned during my internship. Appreciative Inquiry is an approach that focuses on what is already working well, why it works, and how people can build more of it, rather than only focusing on problems or failures. Case Western Reserve University's Fowler Center describes Appreciative Inquiry as a method of identifying strengths and using positive examples to motivate learning and improvement. The model is often connected to the "4-D cycle": Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny, leading us to better move toward action.

This idea connects directly to my internship experience helping startups identify potential venture capital investors. I framed my tasks including: collecting VC data, classifying investors, understanding portfolio companies, and improving matching logic. However, the workplace taught me more than that. Professional growth is not only about finding what is wrong with a system. It is also about noticing what is already useful, reliable, and valuable, then expanding from there. There are many things that can be done instead of directly doing the whole thing over, and personal power is not that heroic in a professional setting. I need to understand how to analyze, how to collaborate, and frame my goal and target from that.

Appreciative Inquiry also helped me think about my own career path. We did two interviews, which allowed myself to actually learn about what I should be doing in the future because of my personality. My future career decisions should move toward roles that allows me to grow together and learn how to collaborate, and provide insightful constructive planning. This semester taught me that a good workplace is not just where I perform tasks, but where I learn how to ask better questions, understand different collaborators' needs, and turn strengths into plans.