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# Pattern, Participation, Praxis, and Power in Unitary Appreciative Inquiry

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This article is an explication and clarification of unitary appreciative inquiry based on several recent projects. Four central dimensions of the inquiry process are presented: pattern, participation, praxis, and power. Examples of inquiry projects demonstrate and illuminate the possibilities of unitary appreciative inquiry. The relationship of these central dimensions to experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical knowledge outcomes is articulated. A matrix framework integrating pattern, participation, praxis, and power demonstrates the potential for generating knowledge relevant to the lives of participants and creating an inquiry process worthy of human aspiration. **Key words:** *appreciative inquiry, cooperative inquiry, nursing research, nursing science, nursing theory, participatory action research, pattern, power, praxis, research methods*

**T**HE purpose of this article is to further explicate and clarify the methodology of unitary appreciative inquiry.<sup>1</sup> Four vital dimensions of unitary appreciative inquiry will be addressed: pattern, participation, praxis, and power. The potential of these dimensions for advancing and integrating 4 types of unitary-transformative knowledge of significance to nursing is explicated. These forms of knowledge are experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical.<sup>2</sup> A matrix framework integrating the 4 vital dimensions of inquiry and the 4 forms of knowledge that are outcomes of the inquiry is offered.

Methodology "pertains to a theory of how research is carried out, or the general principles about how to conduct research and how theory is applied."<sup>3(p19)</sup> Beyond the selection of method, there are 3 important aspects of researcher choice and action that describe the nature of research. These are the ways in

which methods are used, researchers interact with participants, and researchers represent the experience of participants.<sup>3</sup> These 3 aspects of unitary appreciative inquiry are interwoven into the discussion to illuminate its contributions regarding its focus on life pattern, its participatory view, its praxis approach, and its contributions to enhancing power. Examples from the practice of unitary appreciative inquiry are used to demonstrate the ways in which researcher choices and actions have materialized.

## UNITARY APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Unitary appreciative inquiry was created to provide a specific method for discovering and generating unitary knowledge. It is directed toward human wholeness and uniqueness<sup>4-8</sup> consistent with the science of unitary human beings.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, it was created to add to inquiry approaches "that avoid the neglect of important facets of human life that are not fully accounted for when human phenomena are 'clinicalized' with an over-emphasis on diagnostic representations."<sup>1(p32)</sup> Unitary appreciative inquiry responds to calls for

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alternatives to traditional methods responding to nursing's unique knowledge mandate "that are grounded in our own epistemological foundations, adhere to systematic reasoning of our own discipline, and yield legitimate knowledge for our practice."<sup>10</sup>(p172)

The specific focus of unitary appreciative inquiry is the unitary life pattern of individuals, families, groups, communities, or societies. It answers questions of researchers and participants who aim to use unitary knowledge to inform understandings of human wholeness and wish to transform practices. Unitary appreciative inquiry is guided by unitary assumptions, principles, and concepts, and is informed by appreciative and cooperative inquiry ideals and approaches.<sup>11,12</sup> It engages researchers in processes peculiar to unitary knowing, appreciative knowing, and participatory knowing. It employs a variety of specific methods and approaches to accomplish its aims.

Examples of some unitary appreciative inquiry projects are as follows:

1. A study aimed at appreciating the unitary life pattern of individuals manifesting despair as a dominant feature of that pattern. This study used prolonged practice engagement with individuals experiencing despair and data synopsis to create pattern profiles for each case.
2. A study of the unitary life pattern of individuals experiencing despair and creation of a nonessentializing unitary conceptualization of despair. This study also used individual interviews and engagements with participants, which were examined from a pattern perspective for each individual as a case and across cases.
3. A study focused on the connections of despair and forms of abuse in women participating in a community domestic violence program. A cooperative inquiry group of women in the program, a staff member, a student, and the researcher was formed. The group gener-

ated a unitary knowledge profile based on data from the group experiences.

Research in the unitary appreciative paradigm is consistent with the general aims of cooperative inquiry corresponding to 4 forms of knowledge<sup>12</sup>(pp36-37):

1. transformations of life pattern, experience, and possibilities through engagement with the focus and process of inquiry
2. presentations of knowledge and insights about the focus of the inquiry through modes of metaphorical language, storytelling, dance, drawing, drama, poetry, and all other expressive modes: "these provide the imaginal symbols of the significant patterns in our realities"<sup>12</sup>(p37)
3. propositional reports that describe and explain what has been explored in the inquiry domain, provide commentary on emergent outcomes and understandings, and describe the inquiry method; these are both methodological and theoretical
4. practical skills, which are skills having to do with transformative and emancipatory actions within the inquiry domain and skills having to do with unitary knowing, appreciative knowing, and participatory knowing as well as collaboration used in the inquiry process

These aims can be individual or shared within any unitary appreciative inquiry depending on study purposes, concerns, and questions. Heron describes 2 broad categories of cooperative inquiries that also apply to unitary appreciative inquiries. Informative inquiries "have propositional outcomes which describe and explain what is going on, or presentational outcomes which portray it."<sup>12</sup>(p37) Transformative inquiries "have practical or skill outcomes,"<sup>12</sup>(p38) including their consequences. Heron describes these categories as interdependent. Ideally, in unitary appreciative inquiry, the informative and transformative aspects are integral consistent with unitary thinking. However, the contingencies of

many inquiry situations require researchers to limit their inquiry aims to either the informative or the transformative.

Heron's portrayal of cooperative inquiry resonates with my experience of unitary appreciative inquiry:

I see co-operative inquirers as deeply engaged with the human condition, living and choosing with awareness. Each one uses a full range of her or his sensibilities as a composite instrument of inquiry, and as a group they interweave creative discussion with concerted action and openness to experience. Thus any aspect of the human condition, construed as a dialogue between fully embodied people, is available as a topic of inquiry.<sup>12(p37)</sup>

Unitary appreciative inquiry has distinctions from and similarities to participatory inquiries, particularly cooperative inquiry and appreciative inquiry, embracing many of the ideals of these approaches. I have written extensively on the notions of unitary knowing and appreciative knowing as critical aspects of unitary appreciative inquiry.<sup>1,4-8</sup> Consequently, for the purposes of this article, I wish to draw attention to the dimensions or aspects of pattern, participation, practice, and power that have emerged from recent inquiries.

## PATTERN

The primary interest of unitary appreciative inquiry is the appreciation of unitary life pattern, the generation and discovery of knowledge relevant to that pattern, and the creative use of that knowledge in the betterment of human lives. Newman has argued "that attention to pattern constitutes the unitary grasp of knowledge the discipline seeks."<sup>13(p2)</sup> Further, she suggests that focus on the unitary pattern of the whole parallels theory development: "nursing knowledge development is a process of patterning the whole."<sup>13(p3)</sup>

The notion of pattern in unitary appreciative inquiry is derived directly from the work of Rogers.<sup>9</sup> Pattern is a key postulate in the science of unitary human beings and is the distinguishing characteristic of an energy field in

its unity. This implies that there is a oneness or singularity to pattern even though it may manifest itself in diverse and complex ways. "Pattern is an abstraction, its nature changes continuously, and it gives identity to the field. Moreover, each human field pattern is unique and is integral with its own unique environmental field pattern."<sup>9(p30)</sup> "To appreciate pattern one is required to be sensitive to and sensible of the distinction of a human energy field. This involves accepting the uniqueness of each human field pattern and its own unique integral environmental field pattern."<sup>6</sup>

The focus on pattern is an intentional choice of the researcher to go beyond symptoms, diagnostic categories, or a problem-focus as the primary interest of inquiry. In the past, I have characterized the process of pattern appreciation as "reaching for the essence" of one's life in its multiple manifestations.<sup>6</sup> I used it because of the common meaning of *essence* as a "constitution, on which all the sensible properties depend"<sup>14</sup> and to convey the notion of oneness within a pattern. I thought this was consistent with the unitary appreciative inquiry goal of seeking the essence or underlying constitution of a person's or a group's life. However, there are 3 potential problems associated with the term *essence*. The first is that it can be associated with the concept of essence as used by scholars "to convey a perspective that distinguishes difference between groups and similarity within groups of people in terms of stereotypical characteristics, as opposed to constructing people as individuals."<sup>15(p278)</sup> Second, essence is associated with the notion of being static, that one could attribute characteristics to an identity based on stereotypes such as all women are emotional. Finally, "the act of describing someone in terms of essence is referred to as *essentializing*," suggesting, for example, that people of the same gender or skin color think, act, and communicate alike; that is their essence.<sup>15</sup>

In being unitary pattern-focused, we are reaching for something that cannot be fully captured. Appreciating is the alternative to essentializing. The intent and focus of

appreciation is on "perceiving, being aware of, [being] sensitive to, and expressing the full force and delicate distinctions of something while sympathetically recognizing its excellence as experienced in gratefulness, enjoyment, and understanding."<sup>6(p130)</sup> Building on a metaphysical description of appreciative inquiry by Cooperrider and Srivastva,<sup>11</sup> but giving attention to human existence and living, *unitary appreciative inquiry* can be described as "a way of living with, being with and directly participating in the varieties of *human* existence we are compelled to study."<sup>1(p34)</sup> "The unitary appreciative inquirer is drawn to affirm, and thereby illuminate, the factors and forces involved in *living* that serve to nourish the human spirit."<sup>1(p34)</sup> Appreciative knowing involves a vital comprehension that develops through engagement with life pattern. It is relative and seeks for approximation of the pattern and the best representation of the pattern. This is done through the creation of an appreciative profile specific to the individual or group.

Oftentimes, I am asked about my own work focusing on despair, suggesting that it is an example of focusing on an aspect or part of human experience or behavior *rather* than on the pattern of the whole. The focus of my work is on the life patterns of women living with despair or in whom despair is a dominant feature of living. I have tried to clarify this as distinct from the lived experience of despair, which is a focus of phenomenology. The attention on pattern requires an exploration of the various ways in which despair is linked to the larger aspects of human existence. For instance, in one study, women explored the general sense of their lives and the relationship of despair to various aspects of living. Some women linked despair to one or more life situations such as abuse, use of drugs, loss of loved persons, childhood experiences, spiritual longing and emptiness, societal limitations placed on women's lives, actual and perceived experiences of rejection, and the larger despair of society. All these explorations are relevant with a focus on the life pattern, the nature of how one experiences

life in general, as well as on the specific feature of living known as despair. *Despair* is a window into wholeness, into life pattern, into something larger and underlying. The process involved creating a partnership for this exploration, using synopsis and synthesis rather than analysis to identify the inherent wholeness in information shared, conveying or representing the pattern of wholeness through metaphor, story, music, and imagery, and reflecting on the knowledge generated by the entire enterprise. Alternative strategies and approaches may also accomplish these aims.

## PARTICIPATION

Participation is the primary mode of the inquiry process. This is developed through a partnership between and among the researcher and the participants who are interested in the inquiry. The ideals of unitary appreciative participation are that it is engaged in freely, that there is mutual interest in the topic, shared understanding of the process being used, openness to emergent discovery and negotiation of the process, and recognition of an egalitarian relationship among all participants, including the researcher. All involved are considered to be inquirer-participants, but a study can be researcher or participant initiated. Whatever the situation, the participants are each seen as the source of expertise, power, and knowledge relevant to their own unique lives.

At one point, Reason made the case that healing is to make whole and that "we can only understand our world as a whole if we are part of it . . . making whole necessarily implies participation."<sup>16(p10)</sup> I have argued that wholeness is inherent in human life and that healing implies appreciating wholeness.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, I would argue that we have the potential for understanding our world as a whole *because* we are part of it. We actualize this potential through *conscious* participation versus the *unconscious* participation, which is a denial of the reality of a participatory world<sup>16</sup>—I would stretch this to

a denial of a *unitary* participatory world. In other words, participation is intrinsic to a unitary world and we cannot *not* participate. As Heron and Reason<sup>12,17</sup> later concluded, participation is an ontological given since it is fundamental to the nature of our being. "We live in a participatory world."<sup>18(p207)</sup> We ultimately choose a form or way of participating through consciousness.

Conscious participation is synonymous with the unitary idea of "knowing participation in change" described by Rogers<sup>9</sup> and explicated conceptually and theoretically by Barrett.<sup>19</sup> In unitary appreciative inquiry, the participation we choose has specific hallmarks as outlined above. It is oriented toward the integration of unitary, appreciative, and participatory knowing through a set of explicit assumptions, beliefs, and values that are carried out in inquiry projects. As future unitary appreciative inquiries occur, there is a need to describe and explain how participatory approaches best serve the purposes of unitary pattern knowledge development.

"A participatory worldview is a political statement as well as a theory of knowledge."<sup>20(p9)</sup> It implies "democratic, peer relationships," "affirms people's right and ability to have a say in decisions, which affect them and claim to generate knowledge about them," and "asserts the importance of liberating muted voices."<sup>20(p9)</sup> Taking inspiration from the cooperative inquiry perspective, unitary appreciative inquiry provides a context for doing research *with* people rather than *on* or *about* people.<sup>2</sup> This is founded on the belief that individuals and groups are quite capable of understanding and developing ideas to explore whether these ideas make sense in their world and serve them in some way. Outcomes of an inquiry are evaluated from the view of the participants based on whether they make a difference in their lives.<sup>21</sup> "Results or products of the research are disseminated or returned to participants for their own use."<sup>21(p7)</sup> By emphasizing participation, unitary appreciative inquiry, like cooperative inquiry, seeks to capitalize on the

full range of human capacities and sensibilities available as an instrument of inquiry.<sup>2</sup>

The unitary appreciative inquiries that I have conducted to date have been researcher-initiated although inquiries could be initiated by participants. In a study of despair in the life patterns of abused women, the women and staff members from the agency serving their needs helped develop the design and approaches used in the inquiry. These women assisted in the development of a profile of knowledge generated from a series of group sessions and had the final say in what was contained in the profile. The profile was the central element of the inquiry report. The women determined what the content of each group session would be and what criteria we would use to reach any decisions related to the group or the inquiry project. They reported what worked, what did not work, and what needed refinement, including the modes of participation, in doing an evaluation of the project.

## PRAXIS

Unitary appreciative inquiry is fundamentally praxis because it provides a context for the integration of theory, research, and practice in its aim to advance knowledge to serve the benefit of humankind.<sup>13</sup> The process of praxis has been described in a variety of ways that fit with the unitary appreciative process. In praxis, there is an acknowledgment of the theory-laden nature of research and practice and that theory is influenced by the ideological commitments of those involved. There is an awareness of links among theory, research, and practice. Research and practice are "theory-in-action," and practice informs research and theory building.<sup>22</sup> In unitary appreciative inquiry, an effort is made to clarify the articulations among theory, research, and practice. This requires an examination of the ways in which unitary thinking interfaces with (1) everyday experiences and concerns of participants; (2) change strategies used by participants (action component); and (3) understandings and knowledge

developed in relation to the lives of participants and the focus of inquiry.

"Praxis is theory and practice that are interrelated, integrated, and dialectical in nature. Inherent within praxis is reflection both on and in practice."<sup>23(p126)</sup> In praxis, action and knowledge are being informed simultaneously.<sup>24</sup> This is akin to what is described as generative theorizing. This generative aspect of praxis has been described as the "ability to foster dialogue about what is taken for granted" and the "capability for generating fresh alternatives."<sup>11(p137)</sup> In unitary appreciative inquiry, the unitary-oriented researcher is required to place himself or herself in a posture of openness to new theoretical understandings that go beyond initial theoretical thinking. That is, the generative capacity evoked by appreciative reflection and dialogical participation is likely to be theory-enriching<sup>13</sup> and action-informing, hopefully leading to provocative new possibilities for change.<sup>11</sup>

Praxis encompasses reflection and action toward emancipatory purposes. Praxis is transformative, changing our understanding of the world as well as the world itself.<sup>25</sup> This aspect of praxis requires 2 ways of thinking or what Ford and Profetto-McGrath<sup>26</sup> refer to as 2 moments to critical reflection. The first is a critical examination of one's own practice. The second is seeking a critical understanding of what is maintaining the status quo. In unitary appreciative inquiry terms this means that as researcher I must bring a critical consciousness to bear upon the ways in which I may be influencing the inquiry process through choices and actions, the consideration of participants' desires and wishes, and subsequently the well-being of the participants themselves. In seeking to understand what is maintaining the status quo, I must be aware of what are the perceived and actual barriers facing those seeking to change their conditions. It is not enough to validate new insights and understandings that emerge in appreciative and participatory processes based in a unitary perspective. An important outcome of unitary appreciative inquiry is prac-

tical knowledge that includes focus on identifying and experimenting with learned skills and strategies for change.

One of the quality claims for participatory research is that it is built upon a relational praxis, "fully involving others in the inquiry process."<sup>18(p213)</sup> The creation of a context of maximized participation in the inquiry is a crucial aspect of the praxis of unitary appreciative inquiry. Similar to Newman's description<sup>13</sup> of pattern recognition, pattern appreciation emerges from an authentic mutual relationship that makes a significant difference in the experience and lives of participants. This relationship and mutual process is the source of pattern information leading to pattern appreciation. The full involvement of participants includes exploiting opportunities for participant input from the identification and description of topics for the inquiry to the design of the study and through how to represent what is learned and share it beyond the bounds of the project. The relational praxis of unitary appreciative inquiry derives from its assumptions and aims and from the particular participant-centered objectives and desires of each project or endeavor.

Previously, I have suggested that unitary appreciative inquiry had potential as praxis.<sup>1</sup> Recently, as I have employed and reflected upon its use, I believe that it *is* praxis and that further attention on development and refinement of unitary appreciative inquiry as praxis will enhance its capabilities for enhancing nursing art and science and contributing to human possibilities. The inquiry project for women dealing with despair associated with abuse can be used to convey praxis in unitary appreciative inquiry. All of the participants, I as initiating researcher, the women participants, a staff member from the agency, and a nursing student, engaged in discussion about the underlying concepts, theory, and ideas that I brought to the study. This was an attempt to create transparency in the interrelatedness of theory, research, and practice. There was also dialogue about the purpose of the inquiry and the proposed methods to be used. A group context was created for

everyone to have input. As the project progressed, we reflected on what was being learned during and following each group session and at the ending of the project. Reflections and dialogue led to changes in approaches within the project and evaluation of the overall project to inform later studies. There was an emphasis on what really makes a difference in the experience of despair associated with abuse for the women involved in this project. This was a way of reaching for emancipatory results. The relational praxis for this project was the mutuality, trust, and respect that grew among all the participants for individual perspectives and agendas as well as similarities and differences in living. The report of the project included a profile for the group that integrated the 4 forms of knowledge (experiential, presentational, propositional, practical) demonstrating the interrelatedness among theory, research, and practice related to despair and abuse. The report led to the agency staff considering new approaches to helping despairing women.

## POWER

The power of unitary appreciative inquiry for emancipation rests within at least 4 domains:

- the recognition and appreciation of life pattern provoking unitary power that provides understanding of wholeness and context (the power of knowledge)
- the capacity of the praxis process to mobilize inherent personal power for understanding and transformation (the power of awareness)
- the initiation and support of collective power to facilitate positive changes in conditions and circumstances in participants' lives (the power of cooperation)
- the development of skills that create practical power for freer expression in and enhancement of daily life (the power of liberation)

These powers are evident throughout the entire process of the inquiry, including the in-

tent of the inquiry, the design of the inquiry, the discovery and generation of knowledge, and the practices that emerge from the inquiry. The actualization of these powers is congruent with Barrett's unitary theory of power as knowing participation in change.<sup>18</sup> The intention of unitary appreciative inquiry is human emancipation, which "expresses a concern for people's well-being as well as development of their potential."<sup>27(p140)</sup>

The aim of unitary appreciative inquiry is to generate multiple forms of knowledge in relation to unitary human pattern. Four extended forms of knowledge—experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical—will be discussed later in detail. Underlying or overarching these extended domains, there is an emphasis on unitary knowledge or knowledge of the pattern of wholeness formed through synthesis and synopsis incorporating the humans in mutual process with their environment. "Knowledge, as much as any resource, determines definitions of what is conceived as important, as possible, for and by whom."<sup>28(p72)</sup> Participation in shaping the focus and boundaries of knowledge by all those involved in unitary appreciative inquiry is a source of freedom for it leads to a broadened conceptualization of what is possible.<sup>28</sup>

Unitary appreciative inquiry, as informed by cooperative inquiry, posits "the right of informants to participate in formulating the research design, so they can manifest fully their values in the way knowledge about them is generated."<sup>12(p28)</sup> This is personal power in operation as a requisite of unitary appreciative inquiry. The process extends the recognition and appreciation of personal power as inherent seeking to facilitate and foster its fullest emergence. This is done through awareness as power. *Power* has been described as "the capacity to act in ways that increase the sum total of one's conscious participation in life."<sup>29(p52)</sup> Power, from a unitary perspective, is the capacity to participate knowingly in the nature of change,<sup>19</sup> and one of its central manifestations is awareness. In these terms, power involves both awareness

and action. Unitary appreciative inquiry is a laboratory, in some sense, to create the opportunity for personal power to be expanded and exercised in relation to participant concerns. Participants are encouraged to immerse themselves in the creation of their own life pattern through the inquiry.

Collective power is initiated and supported by the design of unitary appreciative inquiry, which emphasizes mutual process in a relational praxis. By design, the inquiry involves at least 2 individuals, the initiating researcher and at least one other participant or a number of participants engaged individually or in a group. The importance of examining the mutual process of "engaged pedagogy," or, in this case, engaged unitary appreciative praxis, has been emphasized by Bell Hooks in *Teaching to Transgress*.<sup>30</sup> Unitary appreciative inquiry brings "people together in empathy . . . making it possible for them to know one another as human beings affectively, as well as cognitively, [or as unitary human beings], which constitutes relational knowledge."<sup>31(p83)</sup> "It resides in the act of relating and shows itself in words, expressions, actions, and other forms of doing relationship."<sup>3(p85)</sup> Relational knowledge arises from connecting and fosters further connection. It is reciprocal, growing from interaction. Relational knowledge emerges from active communal life and sustains communality. Relational knowledge offers participants another way of broadening and deepening understanding that can lead to improving life situations and conditions. Like cooperative inquiry, unitary appreciative inquiry builds on and perpetuates cooperative relationship "where people change their way of being and doing and relating in the world—in the direction of greater flourishing."<sup>2(p180)</sup>

The emphasis on greater flourishing exemplifies the power of liberation framed in the development of practical skills. This involves a "search for practical knowledge and liberating ways of knowing, working with people in their everyday lives"<sup>18(p203)</sup> consistent with participatory action research. Beyond the development of new practical

knowledge, "it leads to new abilities to create knowledge"<sup>18(p203)</sup> and is thus emancipatory. Both "practical and theoretical outcomes are grounded in the perspectives and interests of those immediately concerned."<sup>18(p204)</sup> The primary purpose of unitary appreciative inquiry, like action research, "is to reweave knowing and doing so as to liberate the human body, mind, and spirit in the search for a better, freer world."<sup>18(p204)</sup>

In the study of despair and abuse, there was an emphasis on learning about the relationship between despair and abuse in women's lives and on developing strategies for self-determination and life enhancements. The participants engaged in dialogue as a way of understanding the wholeness and context within which despair was expressed. They identified topics that were of most concern to them and explored these topics to better understand their situations and to develop strategies to deal with their despair. Unitary power was developed through their deepened and broadened understanding of despair that led to a new form of knowledge. They experienced and reported greater personal power by becoming aware of some of the intricacies of despair and how it had influenced their lives. They explored their despair and considered avenues of change in their lives through the expression of collective power using their mutuality and relational knowledge. They began to consider new skills and talked about creating practical power through new activities in their lives. They also discussed the politics of seeking help and gaining support in relation to their abuse. This study was limited by the institutional review board approval process because of the time frame that was imposed on it by the proposal approval process. The project did not provide the amount of time participants needed to experiment with new skills. However, the involvement of the agency staff in this project offered some continuity and led to ongoing positive change. Knowledge, awareness, cooperation, and a sense of liberation were all sources of power experienced to varying degrees within this project.



### WAYS OF KNOWING AND FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE

In unitary appreciative inquiry, there is a multitude of interwoven ways of knowing. The primary and overarching ways of knowing are unitary, appreciative, and participatory. These are the broadest forms of knowing and provide the context for extended forms of knowledge. Unitary knowing<sup>1,4-8</sup> is focused on understanding the wholeness of human existence through exploration of evolving life pattern. Appreciative knowing in the unitary context incorporates perceiving, being aware of, being sensitive to, and expressing the full force and delicate distinctions of life pattern through an attitude of gratefulness.<sup>6</sup> Participatory knowing arises from a realization of the knowledge-creating<sup>32</sup> and action-producing abilities of most people<sup>33</sup> and is grounded in the ideal that "people who are to benefit from research should participate in the research process."<sup>33(p143)</sup> Participatory knowing requires extended epistemologies and includes several forms of knowledge.<sup>31</sup> Three of these are representational (functional and interpretive subtypes), relational, and reflective.<sup>31</sup> The functional subtype of representational knowledge "comprises the portrayal of a thing, a person, an event, or an experience as being related as a variable to some other variable or variables in a functional manner."<sup>31(p82)</sup> The interpretive subtype "manifests itself as an understanding of meaning and requires that the knower comes as close to the to-be-known as possible."<sup>31(p83)</sup> Relational knowledge comprises knowing one another as human beings as fully as possible. Reflective knowledge is derived from the critical tradition, "which argues that meaningful human knowledge must not merely understand the world but also change it."<sup>31(p86)</sup>

However, for the purposes of this article, I want to elaborate on the extended forms of knowledge—experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical—most directly linked to outcomes and relate them to pattern, participation, praxis, and power

in unitary appreciative inquiry. These forms of knowledge are associated with participatory action research, specifically cooperative inquiry. The unitary appreciative worldview, as well as the participatory worldview, calls for extended epistemologies with their integration of the objective and subjective: "we draw on diverse ways of knowing as we encounter and act in the world."<sup>18(p207)</sup> Heron and Reason maintain that at least 4 interdependent ways of knowing are required for participative work.<sup>2,12</sup> One is *experiential knowing*, which occurs with direct, face-to-face encounters with a person, place, or thing through the immediacy of perceiving. It involves empathy, resonance, and a kind of in-depth knowledge that cannot easily be put into words. Another is *presentational knowing*, which emerges from experiential knowing and is expressed as knowledge in the mode of story, poetry, drawing, painting, sculpture, movement, sound, music, and dance, drawing on aesthetic imagery. The third is *propositional knowing*, which draws on concepts, theories, and ideas expressed in informative or theoretical statements. The fourth is *practical knowing*, which "consummates the other forms of knowing in action in the world"<sup>18(p208)</sup> and "is expressed in a skill, knack, or competence."<sup>2(p183)</sup> Knowing is considered more valid if there is congruence among the 4 ways of knowing: "if our knowing is grounded in our experience, expressed through our stories and images, understood through theories that make sense to us, and expressed in worthwhile action in our lives."<sup>2(pp183-184)</sup>

A matrix of interrelationships among the 4 forms of knowledge and the 4 dimensions of unitary appreciative inquiry has been formulated (Table 1). This matrix serves as a guide for the integration of knowledge and development of the unitary appreciative profile that is a synopsis of the findings of the study. Each of the 4 forms of knowledge are addressed in the profile, giving attention to pattern, building from participation, using engaged praxis, and acknowledging the power of the participants.

**Table 1.** Unitary appreciative inquiry pattern-participation-praxis-power matrix and knowledge

Unitary appreciative inquiry	Pattern	Participation	Praxis	Power
Experiential knowledge	Pattern is known through immediacy of perception in encounter, resonance, and empathy among participants.	Participation is engagement, dialogue, cooperation, and shared reflection that bring sense-making to experience.	Praxis brings to life the integration of theory, research, and action within experience.	Power resides in the process and products of the firsthand experience of joining together in the inquiry venture.
Presentational knowledge	Aesthetic imagery and imaginal symbols in art and words represent, convey, and portray life pattern.	Imagery generation and creative expression are inspired and encouraged through the mutuality of participation.	Creation and expression are vital modes of praxis that link theory and action.	Power resides in creativeness and expressiveness that portray and convey the fullness and context of one's life.
Propositional knowledge	Informative and theoretical statements concerning life pattern and how one might understand life pattern are generated.	Propositions are grounded in and derived from dialogue and mutual reflection that comprises participatory inquiry.	Praxis provides the context and method for the action-theory dialectic that informs propositional content.	Power resides with the participants who shape the propositional content on the basis of their experiences, concerns, and values.
Practical knowledge	Practical skills develop in relation to knowing life pattern through inquiry and using this knowledge for transformation.	Skills related to the inquiry process and to the focus of the inquiry emerge through participation in the form of dialogue, action, and reflection.	Praxis offers a context and method from which experiential, presentational, and propositional knowledge can be used for skill development.	Power resides in the development of practical skills that are relevant to the experiences, concerns, and values of all participants.

In relation to the experiential knowledge factor, the unitary life pattern is known through the immediacy of perception as participants encounter one another or aspects of the inquiry, sense resonance in sharing, and experience empathy. Participation occurs through engagement, dialogue, cooperation, and shared reflection throughout the inquiry process. This leads to making sense of the experience and the inquiry as it relates to the topic of the project. The integration of theory, research, and action comes to fruition experientially through the praxis aspect of unitary appreciative inquiry. The process and products of the inquiry emerge from the firsthand experience of participants joining together in the inquiry venture. This is a primary source of power in each inquiry project.

In relation to presentational knowledge, art and words are used as aesthetic and imaginal devices to represent, convey, and portray human life pattern. This is done creatively using metaphors, stories, images, and music, but other aesthetic and imaginal forms could also be used. The mutuality of participation in this type of inquiry is a resource of inspiration and encouragement for generating imagery and engendering creative expression that forms presentational knowledge. Praxis arouses creativity and expression that are vital in connecting theory and action in the inquiry process. Praxis supports the development of meaningful presentational knowledge that accurately reflects the voices and experiences of participants. Creativeness and expressiveness that convey and portray the fullness and context of participant's lives are required for generating presentational knowledge. This is another primary source of power, with its grounding in each person's experience.

In relation to propositional knowledge, it is essential to generate informative and theoretical statements concerning life pattern and what processes are useful in understanding life pattern with respect to the topic of inquiry. Dialogue and mutual reflection that are central to the participatory process of the inquiry provide the grounds and source

for the development of propositional knowledge. There is an action-theory dialectic that grows from the inquiry process. This dialectic informs propositional content. It is praxis that provides the conditions and methods for the dialectic to occur among the participants. Participants shape the propositional content on the basis of their experiences, values, and concerns, leading to a sense of power associated with self-determination and autonomy.

The quintessential goal of most forms of participatory inquiry, particularly cooperative inquiry, is practical knowledge. Unitary appreciative inquiry seeks to develop practical skills to enable individuals to know their life pattern and to use these skills for transforming their lives in meaningful ways. Skills related to the inquiry process and to the focus of inquiry are manifested through participation in dialogue, action, and reflection. Praxis provides a context and method for the integration of experiential, presentational, and propositional knowledge. This integration is the ground for practical knowledge that guides skill development. Skills are developed that are relevant to the experiences, concerns, and values of the participants. This brings about a sense of power associated with self-efficacy as well as communal and reciprocal power.

The 4 forms of knowledge are shaped by the participants and the process of inquiry as it focuses on human life pattern and the use of the pattern information discovered to transform lives and living situations and conditions. The process of inquiry is guided by participants with a focus on their concerns and issues associated with a mutually framed topic of inquiry. In unitary appreciative inquiry, experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical knowledge arise from and are integrated through the participatory and praxis dimensions of the process. Personal and collective power is realized through the focus on life pattern, the integration of ideas, values, and concerns of participants, the egalitarian and cooperative aspects of participation, and the intention to better human lives through skill development.

## SUMMARY

Unitary appreciative inquiry has been used in a variety of studies that focus on the life patterns of women experiencing despair. Because these studies are directed toward life pattern, attention has been drawn to

- the scope and depth of despair as a pervasive feature of one's experience,
- factors and forces that sustain and ameliorate despair,
- ways in which despair is associated with other aspects of one's life, including contextual and historical aspects,
- experiences with healthcare professionals and support networks that have contributed to enhancing or alleviating despair, and
- strategies employed to understand despair and improve the quality of one's life.

These studies have provided despairing women opportunities to participate in shap-

ing inquiries that address their issues and concerns, help make connections between theory and action, and provide avenues for experiencing personal and collective power.

The pattern-participation-praxis-power matrix was created as a unitary appreciative inquiry framework for exploration and development of experiential, presentational, propositional, and, most important, practical knowledge that would better human lives. I have chosen to align myself with those who call for research aimed at "the creative action of people to address matters that are important to them" and that is concerned "with re-visioning our understanding of our world, as well as transforming practice within it."<sup>2</sup>(p179) Reason and Bradbury have challenged participatory researchers to create "an inquiry process that is truly worthy of human aspiration."<sup>20</sup>(p12) It is my hope that the evolution and development of unitary appreciative inquiry is moving in that direction.

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