



Master Thesis

Appreciative Interviews as a strength oriented reflection tool for and by middle managers in organizational change

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Date: May 17, 2019

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Abstract

Background: Middle managers have a complex position, especially during organizational change because of competing interests. This study is focused on the communication between middle manager and employee, specifically on the role as coach and the role as facilitator of employee participation during organizational change. On one hand middle managers have to implement change, but on the other hand, they have to keep the business running as usual. Middle managers have multiple tasks and roles between which they have to switch fast. This might result in the feeling of being stuck in their position. The study focuses on strengths by regarding this position as a challenge. This is in line with Appreciative Inquiry (AI), a plenary change approach used within organizations. AI is looking for energy and strengths that are already present in the organization. This study focuses on Appreciative Interviews, based on AI and suitable for individual conversations. Appreciative Interviews can be described as a guided introspective inquiry looking for the best in people and the world around them.

Objective: The objective is to gain insights in processes and content of Appreciative Interviews to create a toolbox for middle managers to trigger strength oriented reflection towards positive individual change. This study is twofold: Appreciative Interviews as intervention for middle managers and Appreciative Interviews as a tool to be used by middle managers as coach or facilitator of employee participation.

Method: Appreciative Interviews were conducted following a semi-structured interview schema. Twenty middle managers from 11 different organizations within the service sector participated. These participants were asked about their role as middle manager and specifically as coach and facilitator of employee participation. Positive questions that evoked retrospective and prospective thinking were asked to discover the grand narratives of middle managers, to hear about their successes, strengths, best practices and to find out what they wanted to achieve in the future.

Findings: The findings were twofold: first process findings were shown resulting in a guideline of how to use the Appreciative Interview tool and giving insights in the function of different phases. Second, a double-loop learning process was demonstrated where middle managers not only learned from the process but also learned from reflection on that process. The Appreciative Interviewing style generated awareness, it gave insights in their roles and position, it created energy, it was helpful and it triggered the middle managers to reflect on their position.

Implications: Theoretically this study shows a guideline of how to use an Appreciative Interview and how to elicit a double-loop learning process. Besides that it provides additional knowledge about sensemaking among middle managers, the role as coach and facilitator of employee participation and organizational change. Practically seen it provides an Appreciative Interview tool for the everyday work of middle managers and their employees.

Conclusion: By having a deeper look into the combination of processes and content of Appreciative interviews this work shows that Appreciative Interviews lend very well to the purpose of reflection and sensemaking. Using this tool leads to positive emotions, resilience, more openness and therefore might lead towards a sustainable change. With the double-loop learning process middle managers gained various reflections on their role in combination with organizational change. Being in a difficult but strategic position, this tool makes it easier to cope with the paradox middle managers have on one hand and on the other hand it is a useful tool which middle managers can use with their employees. Appreciative Interviews are demonstrated as a strength oriented reflection tool for and by middle managers in organizational change.

Keywords: Appreciative Interviews, middle management, intervention, strengths, reflection

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1. Introduction

The world is changing in rapid speed. Globalization, new technologies, market demands and accessible knowledge are just a few factors of this changing perspective (Bennett & Wayne Bush, 2011; Johnson & Hartel, 2014). We live in a world marked by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (Bushe & Marshak, 2016). This is also visible in the academic world where the number of studies about organizational change has been exploded (Scopus, 2019). World's increasing complexity sheds a new light on organizing, organizational change and people behind those organizations (Belasen & Luber, 2017). Organizational change is now often seen as a constant factor instead of an event with a clear beginning and end. Therefore focus is more on continuous change with so-called ambidextrous organizations which are constantly looking for new chances, changes, meanwhile run business as usual (D'Souza, Sigdya & Struckwell, 2017). Now it is more important than ever to successfully create change. This is easier said than done, still seventy percent of the organizational changes nowadays tend to fail (Johnson & Hartel, 2014).

Implementing and guiding change is often responsibility of middle management (Belasen & Luber, 2017). Middle managers both receive and give direction, which positions them a central position in an organization (Stoker, 2006). When it comes to organizational change, they are in a complex but strategic position (Barton & Ambrosini, 2013). Middle managers are often simultaneously both victims and agents of change, while having to switch between different roles instantly (Barton & Ambrosini, 2013; Sharma & Good, 2013). On one hand they have to be in charge of change and on the other hand they have to guard continuity within the organization, looking for a constant balance between these two (Balogun, 2003; Belasen & Luber, 2017; Huy, 2001; Huy, 2002; Stoker, 2006). Because of the high pressure which comes along with change there often is no time to have a moment of thought about the current situation. It might be difficult for middle managers to see the small steps or the bigger picture (Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006). What might happen next is that middle managers are feeling stuck in their role carrying organizational change.

When feeling stuck, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a well-fitting change approach. AI has a focus on strengths instead of fixing weaknesses, looking at the same things with another lens. AI is always looking for understanding and discovers and nurtures innovation and transformation in social systems (Roslizwati & Zaimatul, 2018). According to AI, changes happen from conversation to conversation, based on the social constructionist principle where organizations are seen as socially constructed through language and stories from within the organization (Barge & Oliver, 2003).

Appreciative Interviews are derived from AI, being part of the AI process. Whereas AI is focused on organizational change, Appreciative Interviews are focused on individual strengths and therefore will be used as a stand-alone technique. Positive questions and vocabulary lead to positive conversations with focus on possibilities, strengths and positive reflexivity, which is the core of sustainable change (Barge & Oliver, 2003; Kabalt & Tjepkema, 2012; Tjepkema, Verheijen & Kabalt, 2016). The objective of this study is to get insights in the content and process of Appreciative Interviews to create a toolbox for middle managers to help them by triggering strength oriented reflection towards positive individual change. By triggering the evocation of narratives that help middle managers to move through paradoxes they are stuck in, Appreciative Interviews might help resolve competing roles (Enright, Hill, Sandford & Gard, 2014). This study aims to research the applicability of Appreciative Interviews as an intervention, leading to the following research question:

“How can Appreciative Interviews be used as an intervention to trigger strength oriented reflection among middle managers in an organizational change?”

This study is twofold. First of all it can be an intervention for middle managers. Appreciative Interviews will be conducted in which middle managers are active actors. They will gain insight and have a moment of thought and reflection on their strengths, to be able to use to grow in their role as middle manager in organizational change. Second, an Appreciative Interview tool will be constructed which can be used

as an intervention by middle managers to use with their employees as coach and facilitator of employee participation.

This study is relevant for academic and practical reasons. First of all it gives academic insight in whether and how Appreciative Interviews might help middle managers in an organizational change by focusing on their strengths. Practically this study contributes towards everyday work of middle management by providing guidelines for the Appreciative Interview tool, which is easy to use. So this work is not only aiming to help middle managers, but also employees, executed by middle managers by putting middle managers more in their strengths as coach and facilitator of employee participation.

2. Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework presents an overview of available literature about roles and tasks of middle management in organizational change. Furthermore the Appreciative Interview technique, based on Appreciative Inquiry, is discussed.

2.1 Middle management

Middle managers are the key actors of this study, their position can be defined as a position in an organization between the top and the operating core being responsible for a particular business unit in the organization (Harding, Lee & Ford, 2014). Middle managers are seen as strategic actors in the change process (Stoker, 2006). The role of middle managers in organizational change is more widespread and strategic than before, resulting in more responsibility and often more uncertainty (Barton & Ambrosini, 2013). This because of the more complex and geographically distributed organizations (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Belasen & Luber, 2017). Sensemaking is therefore an important factor within their role (Johnson & Hartel 2014; Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). Sensemaking is the process individuals undertake when they try to understand what is going on around them by making sense of experiences and events and interpreting what they mean for subordinate behavior (Kuyvenhoven & Buss, 2011, p. 9). How middle managers make sense rationally and emotionally of change directly influences the result of change because they are often seen as a role model for employees (Balogun, 2003).

2.2 Organizational change

For an organization it is more important than ever to successfully cope with change. Key factors to success nowadays are adaptivity and resilience to change (Belasen & Luber, 2017). There are many different types of organizational change, e.g.: merger, business expansion, culture change, technology change and re-structure of the organization (Bushe & Marshak, 2016; Smith, 2002). Change management can be described as “process of continually renewing an organization’s direction, structure, and capabilities to serve the ever-changing needs of external and internal customers” (Moran & Brightman, 2000, p.66). Nowadays focus is more on continuous change, especially with so-called ambidextrous organizations which are constantly looking for new changes while maintaining day to day business (D’Souza, Sigdya & Struckwell, 2017). This is in line with viewing organizations as relational and socially constructed (Barge & Oliver, 2003; Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton & Corley, 2013).

2.2.1 Resistance to change

Each employee has his or her own feelings, opinions and beliefs towards change which can result in resistance to change (Conway & Monks, 2011). Resistance can have negative outcomes such as: decreased job satisfaction, higher stress level, lower organizational commitment (Conway & Monks, 2011) and the fear not being able to do something new (Conner, 1993; Fedor, Caldwell & Herold, 2006; Johnson & Hartel, 2014) because a change will have impact on routines of employees and the organization. Also when people feel left-out or not involved with decision making, they more often resist towards change (Smollan & Sayers, 2009). It is common that employees resist by continuing with their daily tasks. This can result in more fear and will move employees even further away from the change process (Boyd & Bright, 2007).

Resistance can also be approached positively, as a form of ‘thoughtful engagement’ in the change process (Piderit, 2000). It can provide valuable feedback to change. Change recipients can contribute by being clear about their resistance and making counter-offers (Johnson & Hartel, 2014; Thomas & Hardy, 2011). As will be elaborated on, middle managers can make important contributions to change by coaching their employees and by facilitating participation.

2.3 Challenges for middle managers

Handling resistance in a right way is a challenge for middle managers. Furthermore, middle managers are simultaneously both victims and agents of change. Often they have to switch between roles instantly

(Barton & Ambrosini, 2013; Sharma & Good, 2013). On one side middle managers have to be in charge of the change and on the other side they have to guard continuity within the organization, looking for a constant balance between the two (Balogun, 2003; Belasen & Luber, 2017; Huy, 2001; Huy, 2002; Stoker, 2006). Continuing, balancing emotions of themselves and their employees coming along with the change is an aspect that is expected to be carried by middle management (Huy, 2002). Another challenge is the sensemaking process. Often time needed for this process is underestimated because as an internal process it hard to make this task explicit (Kuyvenhoven & Buss, 2011). Finally, middle managers themselves might struggle for understanding the organizational change (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008).

Because of these challenges, it can be hard for middle managers to have a clear vision of their role(s). Due to conflicting tasks, they can easily forget the main aim or the small steps to success in both organizational change and their own role(s) (Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006). These challenges can be seen as problematic, but it can also be approached from a different angle; as a challenge. By searching for strengths within this position and building upon them, which is the focus of this study.

2.4 Two communicative roles of middle managers during organizational change

In this focus on strengths, the specific focus is on communication between middle manager and frontline employee. Besides the middle managers, also employees play an important role in the change process (Mishra & Bhatnagar, 2012). The actual behavior of an organization during organizational change is what makes or breaks the change (Belasen & Luber, 2017). Middle managers have responsibility to guide and coach the behavior of their frontline employees (Belasen & Luber, 2017; Kuyvenhoven & Buss, 2011; Lewis, Cantor & Passmore, 2016). Two communicative roles during organizational change are central. The first role is the role of the coach: coaching employees to resolve concerns and fears (Heyden, Fourné, Werkman & Ansari, 2017; Huy, 2002; Moran & Brightman, 2000). The second role is to give employees a voice by facilitating employee participation (Barton & Ambrosini, 2013; Heyden et al., 2017; Von Glinow & McShane, 2000).

2.4.1 Coach

Coaching is a skill to help someone improve performance and reach full potential (Mccarthy, 2018). In this case helping employees to cope with organizational change which is increasingly important in the current environment of continuous change (Bennett & Wayne Bush, 2011). Middle managers nowadays need better 'people skills' to understand employees instead of just being a leader (Johnson & Hartel, 2014). Most of the middle managers who participated in the study of Stoker (2006) indicated that they saw themselves focused more on people than on process when it comes to organizational changes. Middle managers have a better position than top managers understanding employees to make a change implementation successful (Balogun, 2003). Coaching is seen as a vital aspect in the organizational change process (Cameron & Green, 2015) and consists of helping employees understand why changes are necessary and facilitating engagement in new plans (Engle, Lopez, Gormley, Chan, Charns & Lukas, 2017). To give employees tools and resources needed to implement the change and let them feel empowered and confident in their ability to do so successfully (Engle et al., 2017; Heyden et al., 2017; Krebber, 2018).

AI can introduce two interesting aspects in the role of a coach, asking the right questions instead of giving answers and focusing on strengths instead of weaknesses (Dubbelman & Heegsma, 2018; et al., 2016). For middle managers, it is important to be aware of the influence of communicational and linguistic choices. Their words and way of communicating might influence behavior and feelings of others (Schultze & Avital, 2011). The quality to ask the right questions is another key element to create quality conversations, and is necessary to deal with modern challenges within organizations (Bennett & Wayne Bush, 2011; Dubbelman & Heegsma, 2018). In line with AI, coaching nowadays is more about being curious and asking generative and positively formulated questions followed by careful listening. By doing so the employee can think about own solutions and ideas and are more likely to be engaged (Bungay Stanier, 2018; Mccarthy, 2018). Moreover, employees develop confidence future challenges more independently.

Through Appreciative Interviews it can be researched what is necessary to deal with change. Strengths based reflection can be used to coach reflection (Trudel, Gilbert & Rodrigue, 2016). By focusing on stories of what and how employees have achieved in the past and by dreaming about the future by building on these strengths, a transformation can occur which facilitates the onwards journey of the employee (Lewis et al., 2016). Appreciating a diverse group of people and help them to become better in who they are is a great way to use each person's own strengths and compensate around weaker skills (Buckingham & Coffman, 2014). When other employees have already learned about their strengths, they probably talk about it with their colleagues, causing a 'coaching ripple effect' in which the positive outcome spreads around the organization (Krebber, 2018; O'Connor & Cavanagh, 2013).

Finally, middle managers nowadays are also managing emotional states of their employees during an organizational change (Heyden et al., 2017; Huy 2002; Parris, Vickers & Wilkes, 2008). Besides that, they also have to manage their own emotions (Engle et al., 2017; Heyden et al., 2017; Mayer & Smith, 2007). Middle managers need to be resilient and need to coach employees to be resilient as well. This will help both middle managers and employees personally and it will help the change. This means that there might still be fear and anxiety, but the way they handle it is different. They are able to stay productive and, physically and mentally stable (Conner, 1993). This perfectly fits with Appreciative Interviews. These new skills are important but did not always belong to middle managers, therefore middle managers themselves need to have guidance into how to coach people and how to handle these soft skills (Johnson & Hartel, 2014). That is why this AI conversation tool can be so important and useful.

2.4.2 Facilitator of employee participation

The proximity of middle managers to employees gives middle managers the position to involve employees in organizational changes (Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Heyden et al., 2017). Employee participation can be seen as the amount of information sharing, knowledge, rewards and power among employees within an organization, whereby the more employee participation, the more power and influence they have in decision making processes (Irawanto, 2015; Von Glinow & McShane, 2000). Two-way communication, continuous dialogue and co-creation is important because employees are more engaged with change when they are part of development and dialogue (Argenti, 2017). When employees are aware of their own strengths and when they have the feeling that they are able to handle the change and can reach their full potential, there will be a more sustainable change (Mccarthy, 2018). So Appreciative Interviews might trigger a high level of employee engagement, leading to higher ownership of the change process (Shuayb, Sharp, Judkins & Hetherington, 2009). Having an Appreciative Interview brings more equality in the relationship between middle manager and employee because the conversation is more open to hear the voices of the employees (Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Mishra & Bhatnagar, 2012).

There are a lot of benefits coming along with employee participation, both for employees themselves and for the organization as a whole such as improved decision quality, decision commitment (Von Glinow & McShane, 2000), job satisfaction (Barton & Ambrosini, 2013; Fenton-O'Creevy, 2001), higher motivation, increased productivity (Barton & Ambrosini, 2013), synergy and better solutions among different people within an organization working together (Von Glinow & McShane, 2000), and quality and customer service (Fenton-O'Creevy, 2001) which leads to more customer satisfaction (Von Glinow & McShane, 2000). It also prevents negative results such as costly delays, deviations and failures (Heyden et al., 2017). Inviting employees to participate gives the opportunity to express their ideas and overcome their hostility and resistance to change (Moran & Brightman, 2000). Listening to, and including marginalized or excluded voices is critical for innovation in a diverse world with a complex array of factors, influences, and stakeholders (Bushe & Marshak, 2016, p. 6).

2.5 Towards Appreciative Interviews

A first step into creating an Appreciative Interview toolbox is understanding the concept of AI as a change approach. AI is aiming for positive organizational change which comes from Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) and can be described as "any change that does more good than harm in and for an organization, considering aspects of employees' psychological resources, behaviour, and

performance that may be affected by change” (Avey, Wernsing & Luthans, 2008, p. 50). It focuses on energy and strengths which are already available within the organization, being a strength-based participatory action research technique (Roslizwati & Zaimatul, 2018). There are two basic assumption that ground AI, namely discovering what gives people energy and second, how this can be used to create more of it (Enright et al., 2014). Furthermore AI consists of 5 steps, 5 D’s which can be found in Table 1.

AI has a focus on development, in which the process and continuous inquiry within changes is important. It is built on active engagement, relationships and having a dialogue, based on the constructivist paradigm. That is why conversations and narratives are opportunities for individual change and sense making (Cunliffe, 2003). Inquiry means that there is not an answer which is already in mind, there is space to discover answers together (Boyd & Bright, 2007). This is the reason why AI makes extensive use of personal storytelling and narratives. Narratives are textual devices that focus on common themes or issues and that link a set of ideas or a series of events (Grant & Marshak, 2011, p. 215). The new perspective creates energy and positive emotions, such as excitement and pride (Michael, 2005). These positive emotions have found to have positive outcomes such as people being more creative, openminded, flexible, resilient and efficient (Fredrickson, 2003). It also results in a better quality of relationships and decision making (Bushe, 2007). AI has increased awareness on the role of emotions within organizational change (Bushe, 2016).

The amount of research towards AI is extensive, but the actual implication is still low despite all successes (Bushe, 2016). It is still spreading and it has connections to other methods, for example with Image Theory, Dialogical Research and Participatory Action Research (Belasen & Luber, 2017; Lewis et al., 2016). According to Bushe (2016) the lack of implication exists because the organizational narrative is of leaders and supervisors having answers and clear vision for the direction of the organization. Having no clear vision and co-creation on the other hand is the organizational narrative of emergent leadership. This form is still rather anxious and unknown for organizations because of the uncertainties by putting the questions central instead of a clear formulated answer in the form of a vision (Bushe, 2016). So for AI to gain success and be implemented, the new narrative of leadership with engagement and emergence has to be dominant. This new narrative is about asking rather than telling. It is about listening instead of talking (Bushe, 2016). All of which is also central topic of Appreciative Interviews.

Table 1. Description of the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process. Compiled from Cooperrider and Sekerka (2006), Cooperrider and Whitney (2005), Finegold, Holland and Lingham (2002) and Richer, Ritchie and Marchionni (2009).

	Define	Discovery	Dream	Design	Destiny
Description	The starting point of any AI process	Recognize and evoke potential of a group through positive inquiry	Connect images from the past to possibilities for the future of the group	Create a vision that represents the ideal for the group	Create and implement actions around the group’s core strengths
Objective	Selecting affirmative topics	Sharing of positive past experiences, focus on what gives energy	Envision possibilities for change based on common values	Propositions representing what is best in the organization	Create and implement actions around to provocative propositions

2.6 Appreciative Interviews

Appreciative Interviews as a stand-alone technique are much more unknown than AI as a change approach. Based on AI and “rooted in the positive discourse in social sciences, an Appreciative Interview is a guided introspective inquiry in a search for the best in people and the relevant world around them” (Schultze & Avital, 2011, p. 6). A few studies are recognized using this technique (Michael, 2005; Schultze & Avital, 2011; Troxel, 2002). The Appreciative Interview is an essential part of AI because it touches the core of AI: sharing personal stories and looking for strengths and possibilities. The Appreciative Interview distinguishes AI from other approaches to organizational change (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). This

study not only uses Appreciative Interviews as a research tool, but also to study the processes of conducting Appreciative Interviews to create a toolbox with guidelines about how to trigger strength oriented reflection towards positive individual change. According to Michael (2005), it is recommended to adapt the AI interview also as a momentum for change within the interviews. "Appreciative Inquiry has already shown itself to be a powerful research tool; when this future work is accomplished, AI will be an equally powerful means for interviewers to give back to their interviewees the stimulation, encouragement, and sense of momentum that their own work gains from time and honesty invested by the people they interview" (Michael, 2005, p. 229).

Appreciative Interviews can help to have a moment of thought and reflect on strengths instead of weaknesses. Furthermore it might prevent resistance or use it as a form of thoughtful engagement in the change process. AI does not mean that there cannot be spoken negatively, it only starts from the positive and it tries to reframe a problem towards a challenge.

So why is the Appreciative Interview such an underused technique? Probably for the same reason as AI, because it needs a change in leadership style by not knowing all the answers but by being curious and listen carefully. It is more common and it feels more natural to work from a deficit base than from an abundance base (Rozin & Royzman, 2001).

2.6.1 Characteristics and phases of an Appreciative Interview

How to conduct an Appreciative Interview? First of all, questions should be positive formulated open-ended questions. Focus is on what the participant wants to tell and the motives behind it. Open-ended questions lead to storytelling which is an important factor in the Appreciative Interview (Bushe & Marshak, 2016; Lewis et al., 2016; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). Telling personal stories is the key ingredient for introspective inquiry. The Appreciative Interview differs from a traditional interview in that it explicitly focuses on personal stories from a positive starting point, looking for energy. Besides that, it is not only about collecting input, but also the process of connection between people and generating of energy. So process is equally important as content. Furthermore Appreciative Interviews have the aim to intervene in contrast to traditional interviews.

Based on the study of Schultze & Avital (2011) the two phases in an Appreciative Interview are retrospective thinking in which there will be reflected on past experiences and things that went well and gave energy, and prospective thinking in which the preferred future will be sketched. Future talk can help people who have become stuck in dysfunctional patterns become aware of new possibilities by changing narrative towards dreams and capabilities (Barge & Oliver, 2003). Both the retrospective phase and prospective phase have two main elicitation modes. These are, for retrospective thinking, a concrete experience and reflective observation. For prospective thinking it consists of abstract conceptualization and active experimentation (Schultze & Avital, 2011). Both the phases and the elicitation modes can be found in Table 2. Overall, Appreciative Interviews alternate between retrospective and prospective reflection and between individual and collective frames of reference (Schultze & Avital). They are necessary to reach the final step, strength related reflection towards individual change.

Some AI practitioners also suggest that, like AI, there should be made concrete plans like the Destiny phase to create sustainability of change. Instead, looking back on positive experiences (concrete experience and reflective observation), dreaming about the future (abstract conceptualization) and creating a vision how to construct the envisioned path (active experimentation) "should create a set of images and ideas that are so compelling to system members that they voluntarily find ways to transform their social and work processes" (Bushe & Kassam, 2005, p. 169). When people have insights in their strengths and when they learn how to broaden them within different contexts, people will grow in their role (Budworth, Latham & Manroop, 2015). Self-discovery of personal success triggers to further investigate and create positive experiences that will further develop one's strengths (Kluger & Nir, 2010).

2.6.2 Similarities and differences between AI and Appreciative Interviews

As can be seen in Table 2, there are some similarities between AI and Appreciative Interviews. Appreciative Interviews have an affirmative topic, similar to AI. Appreciative Interviews involve retrospection where reflection occurs on personal stories in the past (Discovery), prospection with possibilities for the future (Dream), abstract conceptualization (Dream) and active experimentation (Design). Besides the similarities in phases, both techniques are an intervention which collect in-depth qualitative data in the form of narratives. The questions drive people in some sort of direction which makes it an intervention, both based on positively and generatively formulated questions (Bushe & Marshak, 2016).

There are also some differences. First whereas AI has the aim for organizational change, Appreciative Interview has the focus on individual change. The participant has to take a step back and have an introspective inquiry on his or her own role. Besides that, the Appreciative Interview only has a one-time connection with the participant whereas AI mostly is divided over a couple of sessions. Finally, the five steps according to the 5D'cycle of AI are not followed exactly, missing the Destiny step.

Table 2. The phases of Appreciative Interview (based on Schultze & Avital, 2011) combined with AI phases

Appreciative Interview phase	Similar to AI phase	Description
Retrospective		What is – reflecting on personal stories in the past
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concrete experience 	Discovery	The conversation is based on generation of highlights and concrete positive experiences of the participant by exploring a time in which he or she felt most alive, most involved or most energetic about his or her professional life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflective observation 	Discovery	Exploration of the core values, skills and best practices of the participant and his or her organization. Then, with the core capabilities in mind, examining abstract examples
Prospective		What might be – looking for possibilities in the future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Abstract conceptualization 	Dream	Envisioning an ideal situation based on the previous observations and describing what this ideal situation is
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Active experimentation 	Design	Constructing a path to how to realize the envisioned ideal based on the fresh insights that were gained throughout the conversation

2.6.3 Benefits and challenges of Appreciative Interview

The benefits to use Appreciative Interviews as a research tool for the content are people being eager to tell stories, dynamic and unrehearsed information with less fear or denial (Michael, 2005). This leads to qualitative data. The benefits for the process are that the Appreciative Interview triggers positive emotions which are known to broaden our thinking and will lead to cooperation, creativity being open to new information and resilience (Fredrickson, 2003; Kluger & Nir, 2010; Lewis et al., 2016). Resilience can be described as being able to bounce back from setbacks (Lewis et al., 2016). It is an important skill during organizational change because a change often leads to insecurity and difficulties. Organizational change is frequently a source of stress both to people as individuals and to organizational systems and processes, making increased resilience during change of prime importance (Belasen & Luber, 2017). Also by knowing your strengths, increased performance, motivation, self-confidence and engagement will be increased (Lewis et al., 2016).

However there are also some challenges and critics on the use of AI interview technique. First of all, it might be hard for both interviewer and participant to keep the appreciative mode. It can happen that the conversation turns into a problem-solving mode (Schultze & Avital, 2011). Second, talking in a narrative way instead of question-answer way of talking might be hard for participants who are not used to it. Another struggle is the high level of commitment which is needed to keep a positive perspective (Sullivan, 2004). Finally, AI and Appreciative Interviews have been criticized for not being realistic and unbalanced with the emphasis on the positive. This can be refuted since this is not a naïve view, however positivity is a starting point and not an idealistic end point (Michael, 2005).

2.6.4 Appreciative Interviews as intervention

Appreciative Interviews are interventive because of the constructionalist base, language as a medium can construct reality by asking questions that facilitate a process that creates a pathway to prospective futures (Bushe & Marshak, 2016). It is designed to work with discourses that encourage positive change and participative action (Schultze & Avital, 2011). There are no neutral questions because a conversation moves in the direction of the question (Tjepkema et al., 2016). By triggering the evocation of narratives that help middle managers to move through paradoxes they are stuck in, Appreciative Interviews can help resolve competing roles (Enright et al., 2014). Not only positive formulated question lead to an intervention, primarily generative questions lead to change because generative questions help to see old things with a new lens (Bushe, 2013). There could be spoken of a double-loop learning process because the middle managers not only learn from the process but they also learn from the reflection on that process, so learning while doing in which there is the possibility to redesign something while doing it (Argyris, 2008). Appreciative Interviews can lead to individual change and growth because participants have sketched the ideal future and the belief that they have the strengths to create such a change by telling what they already achieved in the past (Kluger & Nir, 2010).

2.6.5 Role of the interviewer and the participant

Both interviewer and participant have an active and participatory role in the process of an Appreciative Interview (Enright et al., 2014). What the researcher says or asks is very important because it has a direct effect on the setting and it is essential for the direction of development (Dubbelman & Heegsma, 2018). The interviewer guides the participant to reframe their experiences and approach it with a positive lens. The appreciative frame evokes fresh interpretations and new insights (Schultze & Avital, 2011). Asking participants questions they have never answered before can be interesting to identify the discourses that guide their thinking (Way, Kanak, Zwier & Tracy, 2015).

The positive approach not only influences the participant, but also the interviewer. A positive spiral between interviewer and participant can arise because of the positive arousal of emotions between the two (Kluger & Nir, 2010). Also both the interviewer and participant can obtain new insights, there can be spoken of a co-inquiry (Schultze & Avital, 2011). Establishing rapport between interviewer and participant is very important for the quality of the interviews (Schultze & Avital, 2011). The Appreciative Interview helps to further develop the relationship or, when people do not know each other, can help to build one (Kluger & Nir, 2010). That is why this tool will be made for the middle manager in where the middle manager as a coach can facilitate such an interview with their employee and both learn.

3. Research design and method

Appreciative Interviews were conducted following the phases and characteristics described earlier (see chapter 2.6.1). The research question was applied on the context of middle managers during organizational change with the focus on two communicative roles; coach and facilitator of employee participation.

3.1 Participants

Twenty ($N = 20$) middle managers from 11 different organizations within the service sector participated in this study. An Appreciative Interview took on average 41:42 minutes ($SD = 11,04$). The time frame of data collection was four weeks. All 20 participants matched the inclusion criteria of being a middle manager within an organization in the service sector, dealing with an organizational change. This means that the participants all receive direction from top management and give direction to a group of frontline employees (Stoker, 2006). The particular organizational change was not a criterion. One particular sector was chosen because of similarities between the different organizations and middle managers. The selection process was based on convenience sampling in which the middle managers were selected based on availability and willingness to participate (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Participants were contacted through social network and company network of GTP Medezeggenschap, making use of the snowball effect (Noy, 2008). Twelve ($N = 12$) men and eight ($N = 8$) women participated. This corresponds to statistics in the Netherlands (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2019) which indicates that slightly more men than women are employed in a middle management position.

3.2 Interview procedure

A semi-structured interview guide was made to conduct the Appreciative Interviews. Because of the storytelling character, open-ended questions were most suitable because it gave the interviewer the opportunity to ask relevant follow-up questions to create an in-depth conversation between interviewer and participant (Michael, 2005).

Prior to the interview the researcher introduced herself and the topic of the study. Furthermore it was explained that data would be anonymously processed, that there were no right or wrong answers and that the participants were not obligated to answer a question when they did not want to. Furthermore it was emphasized that the researcher was curious to their stories and that there was a lot of freedom within the interview. Aim was to make it feel like a conversation. After that the participants were asked whether they agreed with being audio-recorded for the purpose of study. All participants ($N = 20$) understood and agreed to these conditions. There was chosen to informally explain the informed consent to create a comfortable ambiance to start the interview in a conversation-based setting. After agreement, the participants were also asked to introduce themselves and the first question was asked.

The interview guide was structured into three parts: stage-setting questions, topic questions and conclusion questions (Cooperrider, Kaplin, Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2001). The stage-setting questions had the goal to initiate an inspiring and meaningful conversation and get participants used to the appreciative part. Questions were derived from the 'Encyclopedia of Positive Questions' (Cooperrider et al., 2001). This encyclopedia was a good fit with this study because of positive focus matching characteristics of an Appreciative Interview. The affirmative topics of this interview were the role of middle manager and the two communicative roles as coach and facilitator of employee participation and how middle managers could be as best in their role(s) as possible, bases on their strengths.

The first question was very general in which the participants were asked to tell a story about when they started working for their organization (as a middle manager) and what they appreciated most about this organization. The stage-setting part is very important because the more comfortable the participants are, the more open and valuable answers they give in the rest of the interview (Cooperrider et al., 2001).

The second part consisted of topic-related questions about the role as middle manager in general, as coach and as facilitator of employee participation. The questions were formulated in a way that it led to both retrospective and prospective thinking. Participants were asked about their tasks and responsibilities and about positive experiences in the past, best practices, blueprints of ideal situations in the future and how to realize this future. The open-ended questions resulted in a lot of storytelling among the participants (Cooperrider et al., 2001). For example, the first question in the second part was a very general question in which the participants were asked to tell a story about a time when they, as a middle manager, felt at their best in the organization during organizational change. After this there was some space for follow-up questions on this topic. Some interviews were really following the different phases whereas other interviews hopped from one phase to another and back again, depending on the conversation.

Finally, part three contained concluding questions in which the conversation was summarized and prospective thinking was elicited. An example of a typical prospective question was: *“Suppose we are a year ahead and you look back on the previous organizational change, what would you be most proud of?”* When all questions were asked, the researcher ended with the question: *“What did you think of this conversation?”*. This question was asked to provoke reflection among the participants and to find out their reaction towards the Appreciative Interviewing style.

A few triggers were carefully considered during the interviewing process. First, a natural curiosity of the interviewer seemed important because of the conversation setting. Second, avoiding interruption and remain silent encouraged reflexivity (Way et al., 2015). Third, repeating participants’ answers was important for both the quality and the validity of the data. The participants can hear their thoughts, a way of sensemaking, and eventually change their words (Way et al., 2015). Finally, probing questions encouraged participants to verbalize or think aloud about their beliefs, letting the interviewer in on their process of sensemaking (Way et al., 2015). Table 3 provides some example questions and the complete interview guide can be found in Appendix A.

Table 3: Example questions of the Appreciative Interview

Interview part	Example questions
Stage-setting	“Which aspects of your work do give you the most energy?”
Topic	
<i>Role as middle manager</i>	“Which of your skills have helped you to properly perform your role?”
<i>Coach</i>	“In what way is coaching during organizational change something that gives you energy?”
<i>Facilitator of employee participation</i>	“How would employee participation in organizational change X (which you just described) ideally look like?”
Conclusion	“If we summarize everything, what are your most positive experiences with organizational change X?”

3.3 Analysis

The transcriptions were treated as scripts to be able to study similarities and differences among transcripts. In the coding process, the characteristics of Appreciative Interviews were used (Cooperrider et al., 2003). This means that no open coding was performed because of already existing expectations regarding the process of Appreciative Interviews. Those expectations have led towards deductive coding in which a sensitivity of the researcher already existed (Stuckey, 2015). This was based on the different phases in combination with the context of the different roles of middle managers during organizational change. As a general base, the two phases of Appreciative Interviews were used as codes, same as the elicitation modes. Also, a new phase was found within the transcript, the present phase. This phase will

be discussed in the following chapter. Beside the phases, other codes were found under the label of context (role as middle manager, role as coach, role as facilitator of employee participation).

Besides the codes that described the process of an Appreciative Interview, there was also a lot of data found which contained a reflection towards the Appreciative Interview. This contained merely data from the participants answering the question: *"How did you like this conversation?"*. During the interview there were multiple participants who already reflected – consciousness or unconsciousness – on the Appreciative Interviewing style. So the analysis started deductive, in which information about the process of an Appreciative Interview was found. Consequently, within those labels there were inductive sub categories found which described this reflection of the participant. First open codes were found such as "creating awareness" or "likes to talk about the specific topic". These open codes were combined and categorized into axial codes and finally consisted of five sub codes labeled under 'Reflection on the Appreciative Interview'. There was a double-loop process learning because the middle managers were not only learning from the process of the interview, but they also reflected on that process (Argyris, 2008). Adding these codes led towards a completed codebook and two tables with findings; process findings and reflective findings towards the Appreciative Interview technique. The codebook was discussed with a second coder who was not associated with the study. Based on this discussion there were no adjustments made. To create Inter Rater Reliability, the second coder got the task to replicate the two tables with findings.

First, the second coder got an empty table of process findings. There were 15 quotes that belonged to a particular phase and a particular context. The second coder had to place them in the right cell. After the first coding session, six ($N = 6$) quotes were placed differently. Differences were discussed resulting in the conclusion that definitions of elicitation modes of both retrospective and prospective needed to be clarified. Besides, facilitating employee participation was found to be inextricably linked to being a middle manager, which made the two difficult to distinguish. The importance was endorsed to distinguish them separately from each other to avoid the term 'role as middle manager' from becoming too general. Finally, some quotes were misinterpreted by the second coder because context was not clear. In the second coding session, the second coder got again an empty table and 15 quotes. First the definitions were adjusted. The second coder also scanned transcripts to get a better idea about the context. After the second coding session there were two ($N = 2$) quotes put at a different place than the researcher. The role of middle manager and the role of being a facilitator of employee participation were reversed. After a discussion there was concluded that both places were suitable for the quote, again having overlap between the middle manager and the facilitator of employee participation section. This ambiguous quote was replaced by a better one. The end result after the second coding session was that there was an Inter Rater Reliability of 86 percent on the process findings which is perceived as a strong level of interrater agreement (Graham, Milanowski & Miller, 2012).

The second part was the reflective findings table. There were six ($N = 6$) sub codes which were discussed with the second coder. A few small definition changes were made after this discussion. Also in this discussion the codes 'Insights' and 'Realization' were merged because there was too much overlap between the two. The merged code was named 'Insights' because this fitted better. The second coder now got five ($N = 5$) quotes which had to match to the codes that belonged to the reflective findings. The second coder made the same decisions as the researcher which led to a 100 percent agreement (Inter Rater Reliability). The complete codebook can be found in Appendix B.

4. Findings

In this chapter, the main findings from the qualitative data are described. Since both content and process of an Appreciative Interview are of interest, they will both be discussed. Content findings are discussed first to provide necessary background for interpretation of the process findings regarding the Appreciative Inquiry tool and for reflective findings regarding the effect of the Appreciative Interviewing style. A double-loop learning process is demonstrated amongst the participants.

4.1 Content findings

First of all, it was important to check whether the middle managers agreed on the roles based on literature, the affirmative topics of this interview (role of coach and facilitator of employee participation in combination with organizational change).

4.1.1. Organizational change

All middle managers stated that organizational change is a continuous process, for example the following participant: *“Organizational change is of course never finite because I am pretty sure that the organization will look different again in 5 years and you are reorganizing with continuous insight, so in that respect you have an ever-lasting change. It is true that the extent to which that change takes place is of course greater or smaller”* (interview 2, male). In this continuous change they see the human aspect of organization as distinctive, people are key actors in the change process according to most middle managers. This view is well defined by one of the middle managers: *“Our organization is working for 30 years in this profession, but there are more companies that have been in the profession for 30 years, so if we continue to do so with the same people, then go you get no distinction there. Digitalization can make you distinctive but at a given moment that is just a matter of money. With technology and open sources everything is available for everyone. So then the difference is knowledge you have and creativity or intelligence of people who come up with new thing that we did not have in mind yet”* (interview 1, male).

4.1.2 Middle management

The middle managers did see themselves in the paradox, as can be seen in the following quote: *“I am a link between the executive organization and higher management. I am a node, being inbetween two pyramids. Both from bottom to top and from top to bottom you have a switching role”* (interview 7, male). Another middle manager stated: *“On one hand, you have the role to think about what we want as organization and how to achieve that. On the other hand you also have to make the translation to the people in your teams who will eventually have to deal with this decision and you have to prepare them”* (interview 12, male). They found it important that there is clarity about their role(s), as was stated by one of the middle managers: *“What is important is that there is a certain organizational structure that is clear. So to know what your tasks are and what are not”* (interview 2, male). Sensemaking was not only seen in the different roles, but also as a middle manager in general being new in the organization: *“I am relatively new here, my colleagues are also relatively new and we are on a journey of discovery within this company”* (interview 3, male).

4.1.3 Coach

The coaching role during changes was not endorsed by every middle manager and turned out to be the most ambiguous role. There was a great variety among the middle managers concerning this role, some of them had a great focus on the coaching role: *“I really think it's my role to know what is coming, what changes there are and why. [...] I like that very much. Besides, I also ensure development among the team so they can easily cope with such a change”* (participant 15, female). Another middle manager was also quite sure about the coaching role: *“Well I think that if the change somehow affects you functionally, you always have a role to play as a manager. And that is something you have to coach indeed”* (interview 2, male). Other middle managers did see some aspects of the coaching role but had some difficulties with the term, for example the following middle manager: *“I don't know if coach is the right word. I*

would see that more as an advisor, for example” (interview 10, male). Even when the interviewer was asking about the term, they found it hard to come up with a term that fitted better: *“Participant: I think the term coach is a bit ... Interviewer: What would you rather call it? Participant: No idea. No, coach is the right word”* (interview 8, male). Another middle manager confirmed the coaching role but indicated that the time for fulfilling this role was scarce: *“I do it with pleasure only I notice that due to the hectic pace of the day I don't pay enough attention to it”* (interview 18, female).

4.1.4 Facilitator of employee participation

All middle managers saw themselves as facilitators of employee participation in organizational change, even being one of their main responsibilities. The people-management part is something they really liked about their job as can be seen in the following quote from one of the middle managers: *“I like primarily the human part in an organizational change. That is the most interesting part. I like it because I am good at it, I am good at putting team together and being sure to pick the right mix of people to fulfil the job”* (interview 1, male). The employees play a big role in the tasks of the middle manager: *“We are constantly busy with people in everything, in facilitating in everything and doing fun things, [...] but also in facilitating, making sure they (the employees) have the right tools to be involved with it”* (interview 8, male). Middle managers also think that employees are able to do more than mostly is thought: *“All interest must align, if so then you can also make that move and also change. And then people are capable of a lot. I also experienced that they can solve many more things if you give them confidence than what I initially thought”* (interview 6, female). They are convinced that when you let people participate, or even a step further, make them owner of the change, they are better able to cope with the change. *“You have to include people in the story and be part of it”* (interview 8, male). One of the middle managers actively engaged people who resisted, resulting in them turning into ambassadors: *“By letting them participate themselves, in the end they are often the ambassadors for changes of this kind, while beforehand they were the people who resisted the change”* (interview 9, male). As one middle manager stated, it is good to be aware about the fact that employees also talk with each other: *“And what you should not forget is that the people, apart from me, also discuss with each other and come to new insights”* (interview 2, male).

Working from talents was surprisingly often seen statement from the middle managers: *“I'm curious. I am also genuinely interested. I am convinced that people make success in such a process. So I pay a lot of attention to that. I have an eye for talent and I focus on that. I am more concerned with what people can do than what they cannot do, I prefer to develop with people what they are good at and then put a combination of what you think you need as a mix”* (interview 1, male). Focusing on talents was not only something the middle managers wanted to do with their employees, they also want to be a role model and be aware of their own strengths, as can be seen in the following statement: *“It is good to know what I am good at, what I am not good at and you must remain yourself. That also invites other people to say what they are good at. Then you facilitate to deploy people that give them energy”* (interview 15, female). It also happened with another participant: *“I think if you focus more on employee participation and coaching. And you also radiate that it is normal, that it is normal to ask for help. That the organization as a whole benefits from it and that people also learn to reflect and develop themselves”* (interview 20, female).

4.2 Process findings

The process findings will be discussed following Table 4. In general, the interviews followed the trends of Michael (2005) in that the participants were eager to tell their stories, they offered dynamic and unrehearsed information and they spoke very openly. Even the people who were not that talkative in the beginning ended up telling a lot of stories about their experiences and dreams.

Table 4. Quotes of the Appreciative Interview process

Phase ↓ Context →	N.	Middle manager	Coach	Facilitator of employee participation
Retrospective				
▪ Concrete positive experience	113	“What worked well at the time was that there was a very clear common goal. So you have a very clear focus. It has to meet many things. But it is very concrete, that is nice, you know I think the tasks and responsibilities were well divided, everyone also knew where he stood and everyone also made a very clear contribution to that” (interview 1, male)	“The best example actually is the man with whom I started sparring for half an hour. It wasn't that he was unwilling or anything, but he was just very critical of how we did it. By just being very open and just enjoying sparring with him, the penny dropped with him. That gave a lot of energy” (interview 5, male)	“The best result is that a team feels like a team. That I am also part of the team as a manager, that the distance is not that big. And the proof of this for me, among other things, was when I said goodbye to organization X that I didn't just shake 35 hands [...] But that a few people have actually written a personal card, [...] I saved it and occasionally read it again” (interview 3, male)
▪ Reflective observation	123	“I have experienced many organizational changes and every change brings something good. As long as you communicate clearly and argue why you want to get to where you are going” (interview 17, male)	“I just really like working with people. And I especially like to see people develop. Possibly because they get better at their work, but it can also be because they have found a way to deal with it for example. I mean my own role is small or nothing. But it is very cool to see that people just grow. And yes that can be personal, it can be work related. Our entire organization is simply arranged in such a way that you can grow” (interview 4, female)	“What we did in those 3 years, I think that is very good. I am really proud of us” (interview 19, female)
Prosepective				
▪ Abstract conceptualization	59	“What I would take with me to the next change is to realize how important it is that you listen, that you are there, that you talk to everyone. And can fall back on others” (interview 20, female)	“I actually want to prepare my people better and smarter” (interview 13, female)	“I think that if you organize that, it is in line with what is being asked. [...] So maybe that is employee participation, I would like to have more space for the critical voice of employees. That it is even better organized” (interview 1, male)
▪ Active experimentation	30	“Well I think that we should first of all agree with each other about our official communication channels, where do we communicate what? Then make sure that we always communicate in the same channel [...] So you really have to make sure that you have and get clear communication channels” (interview 18, female)	“Give employees confidence. So clearly set the course. Where are we going? And also think in terms of solutions and possibilities. Stop worrying” (interview 6, female)	“I think that giving freedom should go one step further. Because what we do of course now is, we involve the team in a lot of things [...] So my utopia is really that all employees of [...] are much more involved. And that everyone works from the office when they have to prepare things. And that everyone thinks along with you about organizational change and not just the people who still work here at the office” (interview 4, female)

4.2.1 Present

Besides the retrospective and prospective phase, another phase was found to have a function in the Appreciative Interview: the present phase. Not only did the middle managers talk about the past and future, they also told a lot about their current role(s) and responsibilities. They talked rather neutral about their present activities. Especially in the beginning when they were asked about their current job, the answer was rather static and it felt like the same story was told many times before. However, later in the interview the participants told more excited and with more pride about their current role(s) and responsibilities. This might be the result because people got used to the interview setting and in particular the appreciative focus of the interview.

This present phase turned out to have a direct connection with the content of the interview by being a check for the researcher to find out whether the middle managers agreed on the affirmative

topics of this interview, the roles of coach and facilitator of employee participation. The outcome of the check is described above (see chapter 4.1). Besides the check function, the present phase also acted as a base to start or come back to retrospective and prospective thinking. Sometimes it was hard for the participants to think about past stories or future wishes. When the researchers asked about their current roles, it was easier for participants to answer that question. It was an useful step toward the other two phases. Future study should be performed to gain more knowledge and insights about this phase and its function.

4.2.2 Retrospective

After the introduction, the conversation soon went towards retrospection. The interviewer asked for stories about the past. Sometimes when the follow-up questions were neutrally framed, most of the participants – automatically – told rather negative stories. It lies in the natural way of thinking to first name these things because of the negativity bias in which negative events are more salient than positive events (Rozin & Royzman, 2001). But within these negativities, the middle managers talked rather nuanced which is in line with the literature (Michael, 2005). For example, one of the middle manager said: *“We still have plenty to do, but I'm very proud of how well the department is doing”* (interview 18, female). Despite the fact that there is plenty work to do to make the organization better, the middle manager points out also some pride towards the team. Another middle manager also looked at a ‘negative’ situation from a positive angle: *“We have a new employee who wants to change things I created . I could view it that way, but I could also view it as: we have too many [...] how can we set it up more efficiently by combining a number of things? I totally agree with that. So I have to realize that this is not 'my work is thrown overboard', but my work is being continued”* (interview 20, female).

When they were getting back towards the appreciative frame, they were more enthusiastic and proudly telling about their positive experiences and what they learned from it. Also later on in the conversation, they could really talk on a positive way about their experiences and stories in the past. The middle managers experienced a lot of excitement and pride, for example one of the middle managers stated: *“And if you have achieved the goal you were aiming for, then I am just very proud of it, so I just really like that”* (interview 19, female). Also the positive spiral between interviewer and participants was present. Looking at their roles with a new, positive frame lead towards positive energy and often positive non-verbal emotions such as a sparkle in the eyes. This resulted in that most of the participants did not even need any guidance to contain with the positive frame anymore.

The participants were eager to tell a lot about their vision about previous organizational changes. Even rather discrete information was shared. On average participants spend most of the time in the retrospective phase during the interview. This phase divided into ‘concrete positive experience’ and ‘reflective observation’. There were a lot of similarities between concrete positive experience and reflective observation because best practices and highlights were often similar. This was also one of the points discussed with the second coder (see chapter 3.4). In total, there were slightly more reflective observations than concrete positive experiences.

4.2.3 Concrete positive experience

The participants used a lot of energetic examples, they often reflected on things that had given them energy in the past. They talked about their roles as coach and facilitator of employee participation with a lot of words. The stories felt rather unrehearsed because participants often had to look for words and there were also some silences in which they were thinking (Way et al., 2015). Talking about when they were most alive and telling about concrete positive lived experiences was quite easy for the participants. One of the middle managers said with a lot of enthusiasm: *“The best part for me is where I could make a positive difference for the customer, in that case it was [...]”* (interview 3, male). Almost every participant started to talk faster and more enthusiastic. This sub phase was very important for the rest of the interview. The more people talked about their highlight, the better reflection and prospective thinking. Because it was quite easy to ask about concrete positive experiences and quite easy to answer, this phase can be seen as some sort of ‘fuel’ for the appreciative focus. The better participants ‘practiced’, the more positive and openminded they were in the prospective phase.

4.2.4 Reflective observation

Reflection on these highlights in the sense of best practices and proficiencies was harder than ‘just’ talking about the positive experiences. Most participants found it hard to put these reflections into words. Although being harder, in total there was slightly more reflective observation than concrete positive experience. It was striking that again, most participants were really proud of their team. As was stated with a participant speaking about the coaching role *“I just really like working with people [...] But it is very cool to see that people just grow. And yes that can be personal, it can be work related. Our entire organization is simply arranged in such a way that you can grow”* (interview 4, female). Also as facilitator of employee participation there was a lot of pride: *“What I find the most beautiful is that you see that at a certain moment the team stands like a block, has one opinion together, has a positive atmosphere together, I think that is very important. And the rest of the organization also sees that this is a club where people are comfortable and that do good things”* (interview 2, male).

They found it kind of hard to only reflect on their own role and their own values, as was literally stated by participant 6 (female): *“Yes, I am proud of myself now. But I am not that kind of person who likes to put herself in the spotlight and says, ‘look how great I am’. But I think I am really capable with many things”*. Being hard to put reflections about positive experiences into best practices might mean that it can result into new insights about these positive experiences because they really have to think about it.

4.2.5 Prospective

A lot of participants found it difficult to think about the future. Maybe because of the sensitivity of the topic in which it could feel like they were not good enough at this point. Another reason might be because compared to talking in the present and the past, they had no stories on which they could fall back. They had to come up with things in the future that were still very insecure. Telling positive stories about their own experiences is easier than telling about abstract principles (Cooperrider et al., 2003).

It was striking that a lot of the participants were already satisfied with their role and the organization, they would do some things the same a next time. Another striking part was that when talking about their dreams, a few participants also were dreaming about another job because when everything would be perfect they had nothing to learn anymore in their current position. Same as in the retrospective phase, the division between the two sub phases in the prospective phase were sometimes also hard to divide. Sometimes the two were intertwined.

4.2.6 Abstract conceptualization

There was a distinction between participants on one side who were really sure about what they wanted in the future and on the other side participants who did not have a clear idea about what they were aiming for. Again, the people aspect was quite important as can be seen in the following statements: in the role as middle manager: *“I would much rather look at the short cycle, what are we going to do tomorrow”* (interview 1, male). Or in the role as coach: Another middle manager, being triggered by this conversation also wanted to look from the other angle: *“I want to respond more to people’s talents and people’s qualities instead of just sticking to the framework”* (interview 11, female). And also in the role as facilitator of employee participation: *“I would really like that the office is bursting at the seams, [...] That the office must be twice as big because everyone feels involved enough to work here”* (interview 4, female). The abstract conceptualization makes the maybe vague dreams quite explicit. It turns an idea in more or less a statement about the future that can be worked upon. It makes the ‘what’ explicit.

4.2.7 Active experimentation

Whereas the ‘what’ was central in abstract conceptualization, the ‘how’ is the topic of active experimentation (Schultze & Avital, 2011). The division of participants was logically also visible within the active experimentation. Whereas it was already hard for most participants to have a look into the future, it was the hardest to not only know what to aim for but also how to do that. Constructing the path to realize the archetype still was rather tenuous. Logically only some real active experimentation

took place with the participants who also were in the phase of abstract conceptualization. One participant had an active experimentation in the general role as middle manager: *“Well I think that we should first of all agree with each other about our official communication channels, where do we communicate what? Then make sure that we always communicate in the same channel [...] So you really have to make sure that you have and get clear communication channels”* (interview 18, female). In this example, the participant had a clear vision of the future path. Another participant had some clear ideas about the coaching role: *“Give employees confidence. So clearly set the course. Where are we going? And also think in terms of solutions and possibilities. Stop worrying”* (interview 6, female). Also in facilitator of employee participation role, there was some active experimentation: *“What you actually should do is saying, ‘we heard this and that, this is going on right now. You can think about that and you can form your ideas for next week’. Then you give people a little more time to think about it. And then they can react more substantiated. The response that you get will becomes stronger”* (interview 2, male).

The participants who showed a lot of active experimentation spoke with a lot of confidence about their pathway to realize their prospected future. It was visible in their words, they chose their words carefully and they spoke powerful. It was striking that when the active experimentation came too early in the interview, it did not work that well. Therefore it is advised to wait with active experimentation until the participants are ‘fueled’ enough with the concrete experiences to have the appreciative focus and then first make the dream explicit before constructing the pathway. When the active experimentation came at the right time, it made the participants confident that they could really realize this ‘dream’. It gave them power to see how to realize it.

4.3 Reflective findings

When all questions were asked, participants were asked if they wanted to add something to the conversation and after that whether they liked the questions and the conversations. This resulted in some reflective findings about the Appreciative Interviewing style. In total there were five ($N = 5$) different types of reflective reactions, namely: creating awareness, giving insight(s), creating energy, being helpful and triggering. An overview of the reflective reactions towards the Appreciative Interview can be found in Table 5. The Appreciative Interview tool is meant to give people the opportunity to have a look on where they are standing now, what they have achieved and what they are dreaming of. One of the participants endorsed this with the following statement: *“It is also good to regularly just look back from where we are today, where we are now, where we are going. If you only take a bit of it in mind every time, it will be fine”* (interview 14, male).

Almost all participants found the questions surprising. They had never thought about some things before. These other than usual questions created awareness because they were actively thinking about topics which are normally unconscious. Appreciative Interviews help with sensemaking and making unconscious processes conscious, this was confirmed by participant 20 (female), stating: *“It is good that attention has been paid to this. Very often they are unconscious processes and if you know how to get them to people more consciously, you have already won so much. What is going on under such an area with such a change?”* The second type of reaction is stating that the Appreciative Interview is helping to gain insight, primarily in their role(s). Looking through a new lens and reflecting lead to a meta-view which lead to new insights, as was stated by one of the middle managers: *“Ehm .. Well it also makes me think so it also forces me to reflect and that is interesting. So that also helps me. I am also forced to take a look back. What do I do with my team or what is my role within the organization between management and the rest of the organization so that is interesting. I never do that. It’s nice”* (interview 7, male). A very special interview was with a women who was about to leave the organization after a lot of years. This made the prospective phase a little bit harder, but the Appreciative Interview was quite valuable for the woman concerned: *“Because of your questions I also reflect on my own role and I certainly think that moment I am leaving now, I actually realize because of your questions, hey, I’ve actually achieved a lot in recent years and I have done many things. So then you actually reflect on your own movie. Reflect on yourself. And then I think that actually a lot went really well. And actually I think it is also unique”* (interview 6, female). She got a lot of insight in her role she had fulfilled. These insights could possibly be used in her new job as well.

The third type of reaction was energy. There was already a lot of energy visible among the participants, but also reflective people were sharing their positive experiences with this type of interviewing, for example: *“Yes these are really my things, oh this makes me so happy”* (interview 19, female). The fourth type of reflection was helpfulness. This can be seen in the following quote by: *“And I also like that you give the positive feedback back in it and I should do that more often. And that is also more to look at what I am doing now and is that also the right thing I am doing? So I have to spar and coach that much more often with other people and such, so that’s something I learn from it myself”* (interview 8, male). The fifth and final type of reaction regards the interview as triggering. *“You ask questions that you do not ask yourself that often. It also sets yourself thinking am I doing the right things”* (interview 9, male).

All these types of reflective reactions towards the method of Appreciative Interviewing are connected with each other. For example, insights can create awareness, but also the other way around. Also people can experience multiple types of reflection on Appreciative Interviews, for example being helpful and creating energy.

There are some indications that middle managers are ready for such a tool in which there is more space for questions and uncertainties instead of answers: *“There are also people who show a little more emotion and then you will just have to leave room for that. I think it is especially important that people can express themselves. So that you do not immediately impose what you expect but that you first make people think of what it means to you? How can you deal with it and how will you respond to it? And I also think it’s important that you don’t discuss a change once, if it has an impact”* (interview 2, male). All these types of reflection lead to strength oriented reflection which could possibly stimulate positive individual change, future study should be done.

Table 5. Reflection towards the method of Appreciative Interviewing

Role	N.	Reflective reaction	Type of reflection
Middle manager	8	<i>“Well you know. In general you naturally do things from [...] Intuitive or unconscious. You now make that quite explicit. And that is [...] so you have to think about how you fulfill your role and in general you are just busy filling it without thinking about how you are doing it”</i> (interview 3, male)	Awareness
	3	<i>“This conversation really contributes to my own view about my position as well. Funny”</i> (interview 4, female)	Insightful
	15	<i>“I like it to make such a storyline about what you’ve been through. And also be encouraged to make that brain-up as broad as possible. So there is also a compliment to yourself”</i> (interview 12, male)	Energizing
Coach	3	<i>“And I also like that you give the positive feedback back in it and I should do that more often. And that is also more to look at what I am doing now and is that also the right thing I am doing? So I have to spar and coach more often with other people so that’s something I learn from it myself”</i> (interview 8, male)	Helpful
Facilitator of employee participation	8	<i>“So you do trigger me. What is important to me is that I really believe that you have to facilitate people. [...] I believe in it if at a certain point I create in such a way that they really dare to make mistakes with confidence, dare to be critical. That way of coaching, that’s my way. Means that you put a lot of yourself in it, so I, too, make myself vulnerable, I try to do as little as possible with power”</i> (interview 1, male)	Triggering

5. Discussion

This final chapter contains the discussion of this study in which both theoretical and practical implications are presented. The practical and theoretical implications overlap because this study has a practical and applicable character based on theory. The Appreciative Interview tool has been developed from theory and can be used in practical settings. Furthermore limitations are described and ideas and insights for future research discussed. Finally the conclusion of the study is presented.

5.1 Theoretical implications

As a relatively underused technique, the objective of this study was to gain insights in content and processes of Appreciative Interviews to create a toolbox for middle managers to trigger strength oriented reflection towards positive individual change. This study contributes to the limited amount of information about Appreciative Interviews. Findings show that different phases of the Appreciative Interview have different functions in the whole process towards positive individual change, see Table 6. The phases were validated (Schultze & Avital, 2011). Furthermore a new phase – the present – was added to the process showing to have the function to check the relevancy of the affirmative topic(s) and being a base to switch towards the other phases. Future study needs to be done to gain more insight in this phase. Based on literature and findings of this study a protocol with guidelines of how to use an Appreciative Interview has been developed to use for middle managers with their employees. This starts with choosing the affirmative topic(s) and is followed by the formulation of interview questions in a generative and positive way and creating a semi-structured interview guide. This guide starts with introduction based questions, followed by topic related questions and finally conclusion questions. Then the conversation should start with the present to check the relevancy of the affirmative topic(s), followed by the retrospective phase to get the participant – the employee – energized and use to the appreciative focus and finally use this fuel to get to their dreams. Hereby it is important to be silent to avoid interruption to trigger reflection, to really listen to the narratives and summarizing answers to stimulate sensemaking (Way et al., 2015).

Another implication is the double-loop learning process. Not only were the middle managers learning from the intervention itself, they also learned from the reflection on this process (Argyris, 2008). This adds knowledge to the interventive part of Appreciative Interviews. Reflecting on the Appreciative Interviewing style, middle managers showed different types of reflection. It created awareness of their strengths and their role(s), it gave them insights in their own role(s) and responsibilities, it gave them energy, it was helpful and finally it triggered them to think about certain topics. This double-loop learning and reflective part contributes knowledge about sensemaking and role clarity which helps with the paradox of middle managers.

Another implication is that this study is an extension towards the studies of AI, but now on an individual base. This means that the information from this study can also be used in an AI session in which also Appreciative Interviews take place. This study agrees with Michael (2005) about the main advantages of Appreciative Interviews: people are eager to tell their stories, it offers dynamic and unrehearsed information and people speak more openly with less fear of reprisal.

Finally this study extends on research about organizational change. With the Appreciative Interview tool provided, organizations can go through transformation stronger. This study agrees that change is continuous and that the people-management is the distinctive part of an organization to compete (D'Souza et al., 2017). Especially in the service sector in which people are the most important asset, they play a very important role, making the guiding- and facilitating role of middle managers of strategic interest.

Table 6. An overview of the main function(s) of the different phases of an Appreciative Interview

Phase	AI Phase	Main function(s) based on the findings
Present	Define	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Checking the relevancy of the affirmative topic(s) ▪ A base to switch easily towards retrospective or prospective thinking
Retrospective		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concrete experience 	Discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drive for the appreciative focus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflective observation 	Discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Putting thoughts into words ▪ Trigger towards new insights
Prospective		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Abstract conceptualization 	Dream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Making the dream explicit, putting vague thoughts into concrete words
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Active experimentation 	Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confidence in realizing the dream

5.2 Practical implications

Practically seen, a lot of middle managers indicated that they wanted to have such a moment of reflection before, but that because of different reasons they had not done it. They did not know how to do it and because of the bustle of their everyday work there often is no time to take a step back (Kuyvenhoven & Buss, 2011). The same applies to the sensemaking process, primarily because this also happens in the head of people (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). When something happens ‘between the ears’, it is hard to understand the time needed for the process. This tool can give middle managers guidelines how to do it, it makes sensemaking touchable and explicit because it no longer takes place only in the head of the middle manager. Now it happens between the noses, in this case between a middle manager and his or her employees. In this way reflection and sensemaking can be planned according to the tool. Time can be reserved for it because it is more explicit.

Another relevant implication of this study is that it shows information about middle managers and the two communicative roles that were focused on; being a coach and a facilitator of employee participation. As was confirmed by literature, middle managers have a lot of different roles and they have to switch between roles often which can lead to discomfort (Barton & Ambrosini, 2013; Belasen & Luber, 2017). During the Appreciative Interviews middle managers were triggered to reflect on their strengths and how they wanted to use this in the future. All participants got more insights into their different roles and responsibilities. These insights in the different roles can make switching between these roles easier and less stressful. Conducting an Appreciative Interview is a great way to look for the core capabilities (Schultze & Avital, 2011). Within the interviews there was already seen that a lot of organizations and middle managers already work or want to work from talents instead of only focusing on fixing the weaknesses. With this tool, it is made easier to discover these talents and build on them, therefore this tool has an effect on the everyday work of middle managers and their employees.

With this study being twofold, the Appreciative Interview was an intervention for the middle manager who participated in this study. They, and other middle managers, can use this tool create a moment of reflection and focusing on their own strengths. Second, middle managers can make use of the Appreciative Interview toolbox as coach and facilitator of employee participation with their own employees. Often their coaching role during organizational change was quite ambiguous. Middle managers wanted to do more with the coaching aspect but did not know how. Maybe because coaching is more or less a vague task without guidelines. This tool can give them guidelines how to coach and make this task more explicit. It also fits with literature and interview trends that more coaching styles are working from strengths, this strengths based tool fits perfectly (Lewis et al., 2016; Trudel et al., 2016). They can coach their employees in a positive and sustainable way. Being aware of their own strengths, middle managers are role models for their employees (Schultze & Avital, 2011). Besides the

coaching role, by inviting employees to an Appreciative Interview, employee participation is facilitated. As was also stated by one of the middle managers, there is already so much knowledge among participants. This is an easy to use tool to make use of this internal knowledge. Because it is based on aspects already within the organization and within the middle manager and employees, it feels safe and not as something new they have to fear of.

So using this Appreciative Interview tool results in positive and renewed energy within the organization, better role clarity and sensemaking among middle managers, facilitation of employee participation which might result into people having more resilience and thus being able to cope with changes. This is a great way to be ahead of competitors because people make the difference in this changing world, especially within the service sector (D'Souza et al., 2017).

Aside from being practical relevant for middle managers, this tool could be applicable for multiple contexts and people. In this case it was applied on the context of middle managers, but Appreciative Interviews can be used in a broader context as well, being very relevant for each situation in which people are aiming to grow, reflect, and want to put thoughts into words and actions (Lewis et al., 2016). It could for example be used on schools to find out the strengths of pupils, it is also very suitable for career coaching as well. Furthermore it could also be used in the private atmosphere. Because of the individual focus of Appreciative Interviews, it also works better for people who are less secure and who do not talk that easy when you compare it to AI in which the focus is groupwise. Also sensitive topics have an advantage by using the Appreciative Interview.

5.3 Limitations and further research

There are three limitations of this study that should be discussed. First of all the role of the researcher and the participant. It was already known that both roles were very important (Schultze & Avital, 2011), this was agreed upon in this study. There were a few limitations coming along with this great pressure. First of all, the researcher had never conducted Appreciative Interviews before, so she was practically unexperienced with the technique. Even after some practicing before conducting the interviews, the results will still be better when someone is very mastered with the skill of Appreciative Interviewing. Furthermore, rapport between researcher and participant is an important base for an Appreciative Interview (Schultze & Avital, 2011). The researcher had never met most of the participants beforehand and some participants who were familiar were not that close to the researcher to speak of rapport. Because of the limited amount of time it was not realistic to have an in-depth process beforehand to really get to know the participants. In future research it is advised to create such a process to study influence on the results. Also with middle managers using this tool with their employees, there is (probably) already a base between middle manager and employee which makes it very applicable to that context. Furthermore, as was already mentioned as a challenge on AI and Appreciative Interviews, a high level of commitment is necessary among the participants to keep a positive perspective (Sullivan, 2004). Some participants had real struggles with envisioning the future or keeping the positive perspective. Other participants found it hard to tell in a narrative way or to put their thoughts into words (Schultze & Avital, 2011).

The second limitation is that it would have been better to concretely ask more questions about abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. The division among the phases was not proportionate because more amount of time was spent on the retrospective phase. One because the researcher asked more about this phase and second because the participants talked a lot and very easily about this phase and they had more difficulties with the prospective phase. A future research can experiment with different questions to provoke prospective thinking. Also future study is advised to gain more insight in the function of the present phase.

The third limitation is regarding the impact of the study: Appreciative Interviews are aiming for strength oriented reflection towards individual change, but with a one-time connection this is hard to measure. In future research a longitudinal study is advised to measure individual change over time. Also because the study is in-depth and quite specific it is questionable whether this design is applicable to another context. This is a known limitation among qualitative research and generalizability is not the main objective of this study (Morse, 1999). The main objective was to create a toolbox for middle

managers. Of course it would be very interesting to apply Appreciative Interviewing also to another context. There are already some context mentioned in the previous paragraph (see 5.2), future research should indicate whether these contexts are applicable.

This study is just the beginning of the journey to experience AI as an individual tool for change in the form of Appreciative Interviews. Future studies could further elaborate on specifics and protocols coming along with using Appreciative Interviews as a research tool. Gaining new insights is a first step into individual change, actual change is for future research. Are they really doing something with it or does it just stay at a new insights?

5.4 Conclusion

In summary, this study adds theoretical and practical insights about the underused technique Appreciative Interviews to existing knowledge. By having a deeper look into the processes in combination with the content, it shows that Appreciative Interviews lend very well to the purpose of reflection, sensemaking and introspective inquiry. Using this tool leads to positive emotions, resilience, more openness and a sustainable change. With the double-loop learning process middle managers gained various reflections on their role in combination with organizational change. Being in a difficult but strategic position, this tool makes it easier to cope with the paradox. Also, the study is an extension towards the studies of AI, but now on an individual base. This means that the information from this study can also be used in an AI session in which also Appreciative Interviews take place.

A lot of middle managers do not have a lot of time for invisible but important tasks, this tool can make these tasks visible again. Organizations are continuously changing and due to open sourcing it is hard to compete. People are nowadays the most valuable asset within an organization, especially within the service sector. This is an easy to use tool which feels natural, results in more rapport between middle manager and employee, a smoother change and happier employees and middle managers. It provides a pleasant way to find out one's own strengths and energy. Furthermore, it is a good tool for employee participation because in these kind of conversations, employees are being heard and they can show what they are good at.

Combined this underlines the twofold presented in this work: first middle managers learned from the intervention about themselves and their roles and second they can now use it with their employees. Being aware of their own strengths is imperative because middle managers are a role model for their employees. Future longitudinal research is needed to study effects on individual change over time and to investigate the effect of Appreciative Interviews on other settings and with a longer time span. Appreciative Interviews are demonstrated as a strength oriented reflection tool for and by middle managers in organizational change.

Acknowledgements

I really want to thank my supervisors, Mark van Vuuren and Suzanne Janssen. Thank you so much for your support, positive energy and great feedback. I could not wish for better supervisors, thank you! Furthermore, I also want to thank GITP Medezeggenschap and in special my external supervisor Ellis van Bellen. Despite difficulties and changes we faced over time, I could always count on your support and down to earth perspective. Finally I would like to thank all the participants and my second coder for their time and honesty. I really enjoyed each conversation, thank you for sharing your stories. I sincerely hope that you can use the guidelines of the Appreciative Interview tool in your future work.

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Appendix A: Appreciative Interview scheme (Dutch)

Voorafgaand

“Bedankt en erg leuk dat je met me in gesprek wilt gaan. Voordat we verder gaan zou ik je willen vragen of het oké is dat ik dit opneem. Dan kan ik nu mijn volledige aandacht hebben bij het gesprek. Alles wat we hier bespreken is uiteraard vertrouwelijk en hier ga ik zorgvuldig mee om. Vind je het goed dat ik de opname start?”

Voorwaarden en toestemming

Wanneer de respondent hiermee akkoord gaat, wordt de opname gestart. Opnieuw wordt er voor de opname gevraagd of de respondent akkoord gaat met het opnemen. *“Graag ga ik met je in gesprek, ik ben namelijk erg nieuwsgierig naar je rolopvattingen en verwachtingen bij organisatieveranderingen. Hierbij is niets goed of fout, ik ben oprecht geïnteresseerd in jouw verhaal. Vaak is er door de alledaagse druk weinig tijd voor reflectie, ik zou graag helpen om deze reflectie te helpen realiseren tijdens dit uur. Om even tijd te nemen om te kijken naar je rol als middel manager en dan vooral ook op de rol als coach en het helpen betrekken van je medewerkers bij veranderingen. Waar sta je nu en wat is de volgende stap? Ik ben heel erg benieuwd naar jouw visie dus voel je vrij om sturing aan het gesprek te geven. Ik ben eerst wel heel benieuwd wat je eigenlijk zoal op een dag doet”* (dit is meteen de eerste vraag, zoals te zien is in het interview schema hieronder).

Interview schema

Vervolgens wordt het interview gestart. Het interview bestaat uit drie delen: stage-setting vragen, topic vragen en conclusie vragen. Het eerste deel bestaat uit een soort kennismaking en de respondent op zijn of haar gemak stellen. Het tweede deel gaat over de daadwerkelijke onderwerpen die onderzocht worden en het laatste deel is een soort samenvatting en een ‘droom fase’. In alle delen komen de verschillende Appreciative Interview fases aan bod: heden, retrospectief en prospectief.

- Alle schuingedrukte vragen zijn doorvraagopties die afhankelijk van het gesprek wel/niet gesteld worden.

Deel 1: Stage-setting vragen

Introductie (Cooperrider et al., 2001)

- Wat doe je zoal op een dag?
 - *Uit welke aspecten van je werk haal je het meeste energie of de meeste voldoening?*
 - *Wat maakt dat deze aspecten je de meeste voldoening/energie geven?*
- Hoe lang werk je hier al?
 - *Wat sprak je het meeste aan om hier te komen werken?*
- Met welke organisatieveranderingen heb je te maken gehad?
 - *Spelen er nu organisatieveranderingen?*

[Onderwerp introduceren]

“Interessant om te horen ... (welke veranderingen er hier spelen/dat je hier al zo lang met plezier werkt/wat je allemaal doet op een dag). Met jouw positie zit je volgens mij als het ware echt tussen twee partijen in waarbij je sturing krijgt en sturing geeft (of er wordt ingehaakt op iets wat al is gezegd). Als we vervolgens inzoomen op organisatieveranderingen, welke specifieke taken heb je dan vooral?” (dit is alweer de volgende vraag in het interview schema).

Deel 2: Topic vragen

1. Rol als middel manager (Cooperrider et al., 2001)

- Als we inzoomen op organisatieveranderingen (bijvoorbeeld organisatieverandering X die je net omschreef), hoe zie jij jouw rol in deze verandering(en)?
 - *Welke van deze rollen voer je met het meeste plezier uit?*

- *Wat maakt dat je hier het meeste plezier uithaalt?*
- *Wat verwachten je medewerkers van je?*
- *Wat verwacht de organisatie van je ?*
- *Welke van jouw vaardigheden helpt je bij het goed uitvoeren van je rollen?*
 - *Wat maakt dat je zo goed bent in deze rol?*
 - *Wat zou jou nog beter maken?*
 - *Wat maakt dat deze eigenschap je helpt?*

[Onderwerp introduceren]

“Zoals ik al van je hoor heb je als manager veel verschillende taken en rollen. Ik ben vooral ook erg benieuwd naar jouw mogelijke rol in het faciliteren van medewerkersparticipatie bij organisatieveranderingen (of er wordt ingehaakt op iets wat al is gezegd over medewerkersparticipatie). Laten we samen eens kijken naar jouw rol is en hoe je er naar kijkt.”

2. Facilitator van medewerkersparticipatie (Cooperrider et al., 2001)

- *Hoe zou medewerkersparticipatie bij organisatieverandering X (die je net omschreef) er idealiter uit zien volgens jou?*
 - *Heb je een voorbeeld van een ideale situatie die je al hebt meegemaakt?*
 - *In hoeverre heb jij hier een rol in?*
- *Waar haal je de meeste energie uit?*
 - *Wat verwachten je medewerkers van je?*
 - *Wat verwacht de organisatie van je ?*

[Onderwerp introduceren]

“Ik kan me zo voorstellen dat naast het faciliteren van medewerkersparticipatie ook coaching een rol speelt in je werkzaamheden (of er wordt ingehaakt op iets wat al is gezegd over coaching). Daarom ben ik erg benieuwd of je voor jezelf een coaching rol ziet bij organisatorische veranderingen” (dit is alweer de volgende vraag in het interview schema).

3. Coach (Cooperrider et al., 2001)

- *Zie jij een coaching rol voor jezelf bij organisatieverandering X?*
 - *Wat doe je daar al in?*
 - *Is het iets waar je energie uithaalt?*
 - *Zo ja, op welke manier? Zo nee, hoe zou je hier wel energie uit kunnen halen?*
 - *Wat verwachten je medewerkers van je?*
 - *Wat verwacht de organisatie van je ?*
 - *Hoe zou coaching bij organisatieverandering er idealiter uit zien volgens jou?*

Deel 3: Conclusie vragen

- *Als we alles eens samenvatten, wat zijn nu je meest positieve ervaringen bij organisatieverandering X?*
 - *Hoe neem je deze ervaringen mee naar de toekomst?*
- *Stel we zijn een jaar verder en je hebt de volgende organisatieverandering achter de rug. Als we dan terugkijken, waar zou je het meest trots op zijn?*
 - *In hoeverre hebben de positieve ervaringen uit het verleden geholpen?*
 - *Welke rol(len) heb je gehad?*
- *Stel je gaat straks naar huis, vanavond ga je lekker ontspannen, je gaat slapen en morgen word je wakker en ben je de aller beste manager die je je maar kunt voorstellen. Wat is dan morgenochtend het eerste waaraan je merkt dat je veranderd bent?*

Afronding

“Ik denk dat ik een heel mooi inzicht heb gekregen in je rol- en taakopvattingen. Wil je zelf nog iets kwijt? Dan wil ik je heel erg bedanken voor het leuke gesprek en een kijkje in jouw werklevens en jouw visie hierop. Hoe vond jij dit gesprek?”

- *Wat maakte dat je het zo ... vond?*

“Mocht je nieuwsgierig zijn naar de uitkomsten van mijn onderzoek, laat het me dan weten. Dan wens ik je voor nu nog een hele fijne dag!”

Appendix B: Codebook (Dutch)

1. Appreciative Interview fases

Code	Codenaam	Omschrijving	Voorbeeld
1.1	Heden	Vanaf hier kan er teruggekeken en vooruitgekeken worden.	De participant vertelt over bijvoorbeeld taken, verantwoordelijkheden en gedachten die zich nu afspelen.
1.2	Retrospectief	Het reflecteren op persoonlijke verhalen uit het verleden.	De participant vertelt over bijvoorbeeld taken, verantwoordelijkheden en gedachten die in het verleden hebben afgespeeld.
1.3	Prospectief	Het vooruitkijken naar mogelijkheden in de toekomst.	De participant kijkt vooruit en vertelt over dingen die zich in de toekomst gaan afspelen, wat de participant voor zich ziet.

2. Retrospectief

Code	Codenaam	Omschrijving	Voorbeeld
2.1	Concrete positieve ervaring	Het gesprek is gebaseerd op het genereren van hoogtepunten en concrete positieve ervaringen van de participant door een tijd te verkennen waarin hij of zij zich het meest levend, meest betrokken of energiekst voelde over zijn of haar professionele leven.	De participant vertelt over positieve ervaringen wanneer hij/zij de meeste energie voelde.
2.2	Reflectieve observatie	Op zoek naar de kernwaarden, vaardigheden en beste praktijken van de participant en zijn of haar organisatie.	De participant vertelt over kwaliteiten van ofwel de organisatie, ofwel van hem/haar zelf ofwel over beide.

3. Prospectief

Code	Codenaam	Omschrijving	Voorbeeld
3.1	Abstracte conceptualisatie	Een ideale situatie bedenken op basis van de eerdere observaties en beschrijven wat deze ideale situatie is.	De participant vertelt dat hij/zij medewerkers nog meer wil laten participeren bij een volgende verandering.
3.2	Actief construeren	Een pad construeren om het beoogde ideaal te realiseren op basis van de nieuwe inzichten die tijdens het gesprek zijn opgedaan.	De participant schetst het beeld hoe hij/zij medewerkers nog meer wil laten participeren bij een volgende verandering.

4. Context

Code	Codenaam	Omschrijving	Voorbeeld
4.1	Rol als middel manager	De participant vertelt over zijn/haar visie wat betreft de rol als middel manager, de verantwoordelijkheden, taken of andere dingen die komen kijken bij de rol als middel manager.	De participant vertelt dat hij/zij als middel manager de verantwoordelijkheid over zijn/haar team heeft.
4.2	Rol als coach	De participant vertelt over zijn/haar visie wat betreft de rol als coach, de verantwoordelijkheden, taken of andere dingen die komen kijken bij de rol als coach.	De participant vertelt dat hij/zij als coach de verantwoordelijkheid heeft om medewerkers te helpen als ze een organisatieverandering niet begrijpen.
4.3	Rol als facilitator van medewerkersparticipatie	De participant vertelt over zijn/haar visie wat betreft de rol als facilitator van medewerkersparticipatie, de verantwoordelijkheden, taken of andere dingen die komen kijken bij de rol als facilitator van medewerkersparticipatie.	De participant vertelt dat hij/zij als facilitator van medewerkersparticipatie de verantwoordelijkheid heeft om medewerkers te betrekken bij de veranderingsplannen.

5. Reflectie op Appreciative Interviews

Code	Codenaam	Omschrijving	Voorbeeld
5.1	Bewustzijn	Onbewuste gedachten worden expliciet gemaakt.	De participant is zich bewust van bepaalde gedachten of taken en kan deze expliciet benoemen.
5.2	Inzicht	Het krijgen van een ingeving, iets bedenken wat hij/zij daarvoor niet bedacht zou hebben over bijvoorbeeld zichzelf, de organisatie of zijn/haar medewerkers.	De participant ziet welke vaardigheden hem/haar helpen bij het uitvoeren van zijn/haar rollen, terwijl hij/zij daar nog nooit eerder over na heeft gedacht.
5.3	Energie	Het krijgen van energie met als resultaat een positieve emotie en veel medewerking vanuit de participant.	De participant vindt het leuk om mee te werken aan het Appreciative Interview.
5.4	Nuttig	De participant vindt het Appreciative Interview nuttig, het helpt hem of haar concreet bij het vervullen van de rol(len).	Het Appreciative Interview helpt de participant bij een manier van coachen van medewerkers door de handvaten die worden aangereikt met Appreciative Interviews.
5.5	Trigger	De participant wordt getriggerd om over bepaalde vraagstukken na te denken.	De participant voelt zich door de (manier van) vragen getriggerd om over bepaalde onderwerpen na te denken.

