Determining Impact of Appreciative Inquiry: A Case Study

Kimberly Davis
Concordia University - Portland

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.cu-portland.edu/edudissertations

Part of the Business Commons, Education Commons, and the Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons

CU Commons Citation
https://commons.cu-portland.edu/edudissertations/219

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Theses & Dissertations at CU Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ed.D. Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CU Commons. For more information, please contact libraryadmin@cu-portland.edu.
Concordia University–Portland
College of Education
Doctorate of Education Program

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE
CERTIFY THAT WE HAVE READ AND APPROVE THE DISSERTATION OF

Kimberly K. Davis

CANDIDATE FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

James Therrell, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee
Dana Shelton, Ph.D., Content Specialist
Sisay Teketele, Ed.D., Content Reader
Determining Impact of Appreciative Inquiry: A Case Study

Kimberly K. Davis

Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Transformational Leadership

James Therrell, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee
Dana Shelton, Ph.D., Content Specialist
Sisay Teketele, Ed.D., Content Reader

Concordia University–Portland

2018
Abstract

This qualitative study was an exploratory, single-case study from the perspectives of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) practitioners that explored how they determined the impact of an Inquiry. Through AI worldwide, the common call to action has been for empirical, critical analysis of the theory and practices of AI (Bushe, 1998; Bushe & Marshak, 2011, 2014, 2015; Clarke, n.d.; Conklin, 2009; Grant & Humphries, 2006; Hart, Conklin, & Allen, 2008; Kessler, 2013; Tartell & Vogel, 2017; Willoughby & Tosey, 2007). Bushe and Marshak (2013) stated a lack of unifying theory of change being offered and “a rather large gulf between academics who study change from narrative and interpretive premises and Organization Development (OD) practitioners who use dialogical methods” (p. 362). In response to the call, this study focused on AI field practices for determining impact and made a critical evaluation of whether those determinants were appropriate impacts for AI and whether they had theoretical support as a means of impact. Through iterative, ad hoc coding of the interviews and focus group discussions three key themes for impact determinants emerged from this study: cognitive change, paradigm change, and behavioral change. Within the data convergence, the concept of a Paradigm Fulcrum emerged as the possible pivotal point where thoughts become actions. The pivotal point concept may not only help identify the how of impact determination but also lend to the discussion of why it works. Further research will be needed to confirm or expand this initial concept.

Keywords: appreciative inquiry, organization development, organizational change, appreciative inquiry practice, appreciative inquiry impact.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, friends, and the Appreciative Inquiry community, which have embraced my efforts with continual support and encouragement along this journey. Thank you for being supportive and understanding and for taking such good care of me. It would be an understatement to say that I could not have done this without you.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to Dr. James Therrell, my committee chair. His constant push to help me dig deeper and go further than I thought I could brought me to new understandings of my work, of myself, and what I am capable of.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Shelton and Dr. Teketele. Dr. Shelton encouraged me and demonstrated her belief in me. Dr. Teketele has a sharp focus on specificity in writing and extending my ideas. My full committee has challenged me, prompted critical reflection, and provided meaningful feedback resulting in my professional growth.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge a caring network of Appreciative Inquiry community members who supported me throughout this process. Your critical conversations and feedback helped shape my study and make it meaningful.

To my study participants, thank you for the valuable insights and graciousness of your time.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................ ii

Abstract ....................................................................................................... ii

Dedication .................................................................................................. iii

Acknowledgements .................................................................................... iv

Table of Contents ....................................................................................... v

List of Tables ............................................................................................... x

List of Figures .............................................................................................. xi

Chapter 1: Introduction ............................................................................... 1
  History ...................................................................................................... 2
  Background .............................................................................................. 3
  Context .................................................................................................... 5

Conceptual Framework and Rationale ......................................................... 5

Topic ............................................................................................................ 6

Statement of the Problem ........................................................................... 7

Purpose of the Study and Research Question ........................................... 8

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study ................................... 8
  Definition of Terms .................................................................................. 9

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations ............................................ 11
  Assumptions .......................................................................................... 11
  Delimitations ......................................................................................... 12
  Limitations ............................................................................................. 13

Chapter Summary ...................................................................................... 14
Chapter 2: Literature Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review of Appreciative Inquiry</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review for Research Method</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review for Key Determinants of Impact</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Methodologies</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Evaluation as a Research Method</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Analysis of Case Studies</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study as a Research Method</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Response</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study Critique</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review AI Case Study #1</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review AI Case Study #2</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review AI Case Study # 3</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis of Research Literature and Methodological Literature</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 3: Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction and Research Question</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose and Design of the Study</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Population and Sampling Method</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis Procedures</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of Data to Literature Review Case Study Variable Matrix ............... 74

Interview Data Trend ................................................................. 75

Key Theme: Cognitive Change......................................................... 76

A.K. Post-Coaching Evaluation Tool ............................................. 77

Key Theme: Mindset Change via Paradigm Shift ......................... 80

Key Theme: Behavior Changes: Individual or Organizational .......... 81

Focus Group Final Question ......................................................... 83

Summary of Findings .................................................................. 84

Chapter Summary ...................................................................... 85

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions ......................................... 87

Summary of Results .................................................................. 88

Discussion of the Results .............................................................. 89

Summation of Results ................................................................. 90

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature .................. 92

Cognitive Change: Doxastic Logic and Epistemic Logic .................. 93

Behavior Changes: Individual or Organizational ......................... 98

Limitations .............................................................................. 100

Researcher as a Limitation .......................................................... 101

Finding Participants as a Limitation .............................................. 102

Participant Responses as a Limitation .......................................... 102

Forming Focus Groups as a Limitation ......................................... 103

Identifying Determinants of Impact as a Limitation ...................... 104

Implications of the Results for Policy, Practice, and Theory .......... 104
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study Implications for Policy</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Implications for Practice</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Implications on Theory</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Directions for Research</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Request for Input Email</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Email</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Demographic and Participant Qualification Questions</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D: Semistructured Interview Questions</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E: Participant Consent Form</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F: Statement of Original Work</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 1. *Individual Study Participant Solicitation, Response, Retention* .............................. 57

Table 2. *Individual Study Participant Demographic* ............................................................... 57

Table 3. *Focus Group Demographics* ......................................................................................... 58

Table 4. *Sample Theme Member Checking Comments and Relational Connections Analysis* ... 67

Table 5. *Evidence of Impact: Occurrence of Each Theme* ......................................................... 73

Table 6. *Variables of Transformative Appreciative Inquiry* ...................................................... 74

Table 7. *Comparative Analysis of Key Themes to Current AI Theories* ...................................... 91
List of Figures

Figure 1. Conceptual Map For The Research Focus ................................................................. 6

Figure 2. Graphic Representation of the 4-D-Cycle Model ...................................................... 17

Figure 3. Graphic Representation of the 5-D-Cycle Model ...................................................... 20

Figure 4. Relational Graphic ........................................................................................................ 64

Figure 5. Bubble chart of preliminary themes ............................................................................. 66

Figure 6. Paradigm shift fulcrum ................................................................................................ 97
Chapter 1: Introduction

Organization Development (OD) is not a new concept. A prevalent method for achieving OD is through a method called Appreciative Inquiry (AI), conceptualized by Cooperrider and Srivastva in the late 1980s (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987). Appreciative Inquiry is a strengths-based approach to change management that can be applied to individuals, small groups, or whole organizations and is used in, virtually, all types of interactions. Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly (2011) described AI as a compass which provides processes for “exploration, rapid prototyping, and constant exploration through continuous dialogue that focuses on what one is learning and how that is a precursor for the next exploration” (p. 9). The Center for Appreciative Inquiry (n.d.) described AI as a means to guide organizations, groups and communities through shifting their collective ways of being and focusing on what is right in their organizations, groups or communities, rather than what is wrong, to intentionally create more of what is working in their organization, group or community.

Throughout the worldwide AI community, the common call to action is for empirical, critical analysis of the theory and practices of AI to keep up with rapid global changes and organizational needs (Bushe, 1998; Bushe & Marshak, 2011, 2014, 2015; Clarke, n.d.; Conklin, 2009; Grant & Humphries, 2006; Hart, Conklin, & Allen, 2008; Kessler, 2013; Tartell & Vogel, 2017; Willoughby & Tosey, 2007). Bushe and Marshak (2013) identified a lack of unifying theory of change being offered and “a rather large gulf between academics who study change from narrative and interpretive premises and OD practitioners who use dialogical methods” (p. 362). In response to the call, this study focuses on AI field practices for determining impact and makes a critical evaluation of whether those determinants are appropriate impacts for AI and whether there is theoretical support for those determinants as a means of impact. This bound,
single-case study is an exploration of whether AI can have tangible impacts on the organization’s selected topics for the inquiry and how they might be determined. Therefore, this study focuses on the processes of AI as a critical analysis of theory and practice.

**History**

The action research created in the 1950s was concerned with creating a research method that would lead to practical results as well as the development of new social theory. The hope was that action research would be an essential tool in social change. A key emphasis of action researchers has been to involve their subjects as coresearchers. Action research was and still is, a cornerstone of organization development practice. Appreciative inquiry, a theory of organizing and method for changing social systems, is one of the more critical advances in action research since the 1950’s (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

As a method of OD, AI is designed to guide a business to greater success. According to Bushe and Marshak (2016), researchers, teachers, and practitioners currently lack clear guidance for best practices to use when implementing AI and describe the change industry tendency to adhere to the traditional change concept of *unfreezing* the social equilibrium, creating *movement* towards the new ideas of future equilibrium, and then *refreezing* those ideas in order to have sustainable change while actually incorporating practices that fall outside this mindset (Bushe & Marshak, 2014b, p. 57).

Appreciative Inquiry, as a more recent form of organizational development OD, employs a dialogic theory that is closely related to the constructivist and interpretive approaches of social science, as opposed to the mechanistic and diagnostic behavior approaches found in traditional OD frameworks (Bushe & Marshak, 2014b; Watkins, Mohr, & Kelly, 2011). Constructivism posits that people actively construct their own object reality through their new experiences and
prior knowledge used to interpret new information (David, 2015). Interpretive approaches to
social sciences focus on the importance of meaning and action to analyze social problems
(Crossman, 2017).

**Background**

Bushe and Marshak (2015) reported that most book and journal published case studies
are almost always deemed as successes, although studies of actual success rates of any change
efforts are well below 50% (Beer, Eisenstat & Spector, 1990; Zackrison & Freedman, 2003). Studies that explore successes and failures of AI are needed to help explain moderators and
contingencies that influence AI outcomes (Grant, 2006; Grant & Humphries, 2006; Head, 2005).
McNamara (2012) identified that attempts at more efficient organizations were lacking essential
ingredients, especially the distinction between content and process. McNamara defined content as the primary focus for consulting, whereas, discovery of processes is still pending. What is
needed, then, is a critical analysis of the process for whether, and how, practitioners determine
the impact of an AI.

Some facilitators are more successful at leading an AI than others. Merely following the
formulas prescribed for running an inquiry is no guarantee that successful, transformational
changes will occur. In fact, Bushe (2007) reported findings of seemingly good AI summits with
little actual change whilst other, less generative summits effect more change. Dematteo and
Reeves (2011) recounted in their examination of an interprofessional initiative that participants
reported having high levels of energy and enthusiasm as a result of AI. However, they also
described problems within the same study, which included the participant’s ability to translate
the “AI process into achievable structural level (e.g., professional, cultural) changes” (abstract,
example in original text) limiting meaningful, lasting change. Further evidence for why
exploration of how AI practitioners might identify some tools and techniques to determine the impact of an inquiry is so important.

Bushe and Marshak (2015) have described current OD practices as a bifurcation of traditional OD practices. Some of the newer OD practices have stemmed from trial and error, and finding what worked for change within the organization in the absence of theory. Bushe and Marshak also described AI method as a modern OD practice, which most clearly articulates differences from traditional OD over other non-traditionally defined methods of OD. Organizations do not have an “inherently real form of social organizing to be discovered [instead], AI seeks to evoke new ideas that will compel self-organizing change” (Bushe and Marshak, 2009, p. 352). Instead of using data collection to diagnose an organization by some concocted model of perfection, the AI change consultant collects the narratives about what’s best from the worker’s perspective with inquiries framed at first contact. Structured questions engage the worker’s in dialogue to identify shared meaning and future visions of their work. During an AI, the practitioner is not acting as an industry expert, but a change process expert that merely facilitates the conversations to allow the organization to discover their own remedies. Newer, loosely defined OD practices with fewer theoretical foundations exclude using data collection to diagnose an organization; the AI change consultant typically collects the narratives about what’s best with the inquiries framed during the first contact with the organization. Contemporary researchers are beginning to investigate critical turns in AI that would reconnect practices with blended foundations in social constructivism, grounded theory, critical theory, and appreciative inquiry for Critical Appreciative Inquiry (CAI) and Critical Appreciative Processes (CAPs) (Bushe, 2007, 2010, 2013; Cooperrider, 2014; McArthur-Blair & Cockell, n.d.; Ridley-
Duff & Duncan, 2013, 2014). The missing component from these frameworks is the determination of impact.

**Context**

There is an abundance of information on Cooperrider’s (n.d.) 4-D Model and Five Principles of Appreciative Inquiry, which are the content of AI and focus of consulting efforts. The process of AI is what this study brings under scrutiny; more specifically, how the practitioner determines the impact of AI. Though research is indicating success for newer OD practices, such as AI, the lack of theoretical framework, without finding the common threads between OD practices that are working and establishing a newly defined theoretical framework of standards for OD practice, the work and determinants of impact cannot be deemed reliable or valid. Even with the rise in popularity and published descriptions of AI, Bushe and Kassam (2005) described an “almost complete lack of published research exists examining it” (p. 161). By 2005, only two studies had attempted to determine whether an AI had an impact, the first study by Bushe and Coetzer (1995) and the second by Jones (1998).

**Conceptual Framework and Rationale**

Previous researchers suggested a need for attention towards a more finely tuned enunciated theoretical basis of AI. Bushe and Marshak (2013) stated a lack of unifying theory of change being offered and “a rather large gulf between academics who study change from narrative and interpretive premises and OD practitioners who use dialogical methods” (p. 362). Though practitioners may have effective techniques, they may not have a base founded on coherent theoretical frameworks. “Bringing these disparate worlds of organizational change together would be extremely useful for furthering scholarship in OD” (Bushe & Marshak, 2009, p. 363). Johansson and Lu (2017) presented three potential approaches to evaluating AI impact:
Logic Models (Kellog, 1998) for traditional formative and summative assessments; Developmental Evaluation Models (Patton, 2001) for continuous real-time feedback; and Theory of Change Models (Weiss, 1995) as a blended, and preferred, approach. However, the actual distinction between the different assessment approaches is less important than the context and purpose of the evaluation (Johansson & Lu, 2017).

To explore how to identify the organizational impact of an AI, I conducted my research through an exploratory, single-case study analysis of AI practitioners for “moderating and mediating conditions that effect how AI is best done and under what conditions, opportunities, and limitations” (Bushe, 2013, p. 5). The primary analysis focused on the evidence of outcome measures the practitioners use as they employ AI to identify the intervention impact. Consider the following conceptual map (Figure 1) to illustrate this research focus:

![Conceptual Map](image)

*Figure 1. Conceptual map for the research focus. Critical analysis of how impact is determined and the theoretical supports to validate those determinants.*

**Topic**

Organization Development interventions focus on improving organizational performance and employees’ well-being. According to Robbins (1994), OD integrates a collection of planned
change interventions that rely on humanistic and democratic values, aimed at improving organizational effectiveness, and employees’ well-being. Appreciative Inquiry is an OD method implemented as a strengths-based approach to change management as opposed to the deficit model used under many OD methodologies. My research topic focused on AI determinants of impact through the case study analysis of individual interviews, mini-focus group discussions, a focus group discussion, and sample documents as impact determinant tools.

**Statement of the Problem**

It is not known how AI practitioners determine the impact of an AI. As previously mentioned, there is a lack of unifying theory of change and a rather gap between academics who study change from narrative and interpretive premises and OD. Though there are some perspectives on what should be measured as an indication of impact (Burke, 2017) and which approaches might be used to evaluate impact (Johansson & Lu, 2017) there is still a consensus for a need to validate the work done in AI and a lack of practitioners engaging in assessment pieces in their inquiries (Tartell & Vogel, 2017).

The field of AI practice requires more understanding of best practices for determining the impact of AI for transformational organization change. Practitioners are well versed in the traditional, Lewinian change model of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing for how effective change should be done. To answer *what* is being changed differs in current interventions (Burke, 2017, pp. 15-16). Perhaps, the differentiating factor of effective OD lies in the understanding of *why* the intervention worked (G. Bushe, personal communication, December 24, 2017). Though there are many perspectives on what to measure, the consensus remains for a need to validate the work done in OD.
Purpose of the Study and Research Question

This case study is an exploration of how appreciative inquiry practitioners determine impact in AI. Previous research has identified gaps between content and process (McNamara, 2012), academics and field practices (Bushe & Marshak, 2015), and the ability to determine impacts and critical analysis of practices (Beer, Eisenstat & Spector, 1990; Zackrison & Freedman, 2003). As a popular method for achieving transformational change, AI requires empirical, critical analysis of its theory and practices. This study focus is on field practices; specifically, how to determine impact of an AI. To this end, the research question for this study is: How do practitioners determine an impact of AI?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

Exploratory case study analysis of my research question is appropriate to research the topic because, "the ultimate goal of the case study is to uncover patterns, determine meanings, construct conclusions and build theory” (Patton & Appelbaum, 2003, p. 67). Gläser and Laudel (1999, abstract) extend this goal by adding that qualitative content analysis could be "an interesting form of data analysis for projects that aim to start from theory and contribute to it" (p. 78). Research by case study analysis may uncover patterns, determine meanings, and help the construction of conclusions and furthering theory relating to AI (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). Interview research can provide direct, holistic reports of field practices (Creswell, 2014; Krueger & Casey, 2010; Seidman, 2006).

This study is relevant and significant in that it has the potential to expand current AI theory and practices and close the identified industry gaps, which have implications on contingency planning and design strategies for practitioners. At this time, the reported final phase of an AI, Destiny Phase, becomes ambiguous in research study descriptions. The
ambiguity in study descriptions and lack of research on AI impact determinants is due to the lack of approaches identified to use when determining impact (Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Grant & Humphries, 2006; Tartell & Vogel, 2017). The recognition of a need to identify critical appreciative processes for evaluation has been touted for some time now. As researchers are questioning these processes through a critical lens, the debate over whether AI had an impact and how it will be determined is still missing from the analytical discussions, even though the need has been identified as an industry gap (Tartell & Vogel, 2017). Having a repertoire of approaches that could be applied to different inquiry contexts and purposes would remove the ambiguity and support the unification and blending of theories for field practices.

Removing ambiguity can increase professional credibility. Being able to provide connections between interventions and long-term impact adds an accountability piece for potential research funding sources and organizational leadership. OD scholarship could also be influenced requiring changes to the teaching materials and course delivery, as well as changes to post-graduate field training. There may be ethical considerations for fieldwork to ensure practitioners deliver a service or product with a value that can be determined.

**Definition of Terms**

McNamara (2012) defined the difference between organizational development and organization development: *organizational development* refers to the nature and scope of change in a significant portion of the entire organization and *organization development* refers to a field of well-trained people with expertise in guiding successful organizational development. When considering practices in organization development, it is essential to distinguish between *content*—where most of the above consulting almost certainly focused—and *process*, something
yet to be discovered, but explored in this study (Bushe & Marshak, 2015). Other terms defined for this study are listed below:

*Impact*: is a tangible change in the individual or organization that is directly correlated to the AI process.

*Dialogic OD Mindset*: is the specific way a change practitioner consults an organization that is driven by the dynamic interactions between the participants to facilitate a common goal or outcome measure developed by the group through discourse.

*Diagnostic Organization Development (OD)*: is a mechanistic, behavior-centered method for collecting data and making change decisions based on that data used to create models of optimal ‘healthy’ organizations for each environment as a measure to compare or contrast teams or organizations to and then plan organizational interventions or ‘treatments’ based on those diagnostic findings and seeking treatments for organizational deficiencies (McNamara, 2012).

*Appreciative Inquiry* is an organizational development process and approach to change management that grows out of social constructionist thought and its applications to management and organizational transformation. The process employs deliberately positive assumptions about people, organizations, and relationships while omitting deficit-oriented approaches to management to transform organizational approaches to improvement and effectiveness (Whitney, Cooperrider, & Stavros, 2008).

*Appreciative inquiry case studies* are conducted as action research to yield systematic inquiries designed to produce practical results capable of improving a specific aspect of practice and made public to enable scrutiny and further testing.
**Critical Appreciative Processes** expand Appreciative Inquiry by blending elements of grounded theory, critical theory and appreciative inquiry forming a new model for leaders to consider in their application of AI processes and principles (Ridley-Duff & Duncan, 2013).

**Appreciative Inquiry Best Practices** are professional procedures utilized when conducting and AI intervention that are accepted as the most effective methods to implement the activity.

**Postpositivist Interpretive Framework** is exemplified in the systematic procedures of grounded theory; the analytic data analysis steps in phenomenology, and the data analysis strategies of case comparisons (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 24).

**Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations**

**Assumptions**

The researcher used an interpretive framework guiding the philosophical assumptions of this study, which are structured by the individual bias brought to the research process. An interpretive framework is a “research approach that seeks in-depth understanding of a topic or subject through observation or interaction; this approach is not based on hypothesis testing” (Sociology Dictionary, 2012). Having medical and science training leads interpretations towards a postpositivism perspective without being overly stringent in scientific cause and effect. Creswell and Poth (2017) defined postpositivism as having a scientific approach, due to previous training, with the latitude of cause and effect being a probability as to whether a cause will lead directly to a specific effect.

Assumptions are considered to be beliefs, usually developed over time through our experiences and understandings, which influence and inform our research. Creswell and Poth (2017) described situating philosophical assumptions and interpretive frameworks within the qualitative research process, also called paradigm perspectives and theoretical orientations,
respectively. Philosophical assumptions are important to qualitative research to provide direction to the goals and outcomes. They influence the derivation of the problem and formation of the research question. They also are the basis of the evaluation criteria for research-related decisions. This study is framed from the epistemological assumption philosophy relative to the subjective evidence derived from the published case studies and survey participants. Assumptions in this study include (Fowler, 2014):

- Practitioners are well versed in AI: Efforts to ensure expertise will be made through the requirement they are focused on AI as the primary method of their OD practice with at least three years of AI field experience.
- Practitioners will answer honestly and factually: To solicit honest and forthcoming responses during the interviews, participants will be guaranteed confidentiality of their identity, responses, and documents shared with the researcher.
- The study design and methodology are most appropriate to answer my research question: Conducting a comprehensive literature review of research design and methodology determine which ones could be used and rule out the less favorable methods to answer my question.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations in a research study are the boundaries established by the investigator (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In this study the researcher chose to bind the qualitative study to maintain reasonableness in scope, resources, and time constraints in the following way:

- Practitioners determine the impact of their interventions: A participation requirement will be that they profess to determine impacts. They will describe through interviews
how they determine impact and provide copies of any documents used in
determination for research review.

- Organizational leaders will have completed an entire AI and remained with the
  organization at least six month post AI: Only administrators who reported to have
  completed an AI and remained with the organization for six months will be selected
  as study participants.
- The interview responses will only be solicited from the specific AI professional
  organizations and networking groups. The solicitations could be expanded if I do not
  get enough participants from my initial invitations.
- The only aspect of AI considered in this study is how the practitioner determines
  impact.
- The eight individual interview participants will be the sole members of the focus
  group.
- The restriction of participants who exclusively, or primarily, practice AI.

Limitations

Wargo (2015) defined research limitations as areas, or variables, for which the researcher
has no control over. Limitations may include sample sizes, methodology constraints, length of
the study, and response rate. For this study, the following limitations are considered (Simon &
Goes, 2013):

- Validity and Reliability: This qualitative study will use interviews and focus group
discussions that will be conducted through a setting and context difficult to replicate,
limiting the research validity and reliability.
• Causal Inferences: Though this study explores how AI practitioners determine impact it may be difficult to demonstrate causal inferences due to the inability to exclude alternate explanations.

• Transferability: This exploratory study represents a single unit of study. Though the results can suggest transferability, generalization will not be able to be determined. This study explores a potential problem in AI that would need to be followed up with additional studies to determine transferability and possible generalization.

Chapter Summary

Chapter one is an overview of AI as an OD practice and states a need to be able to assess AI field processes. The component left out of the critical evaluation of AI processes is identifying how practitioners determine the impact of an AI intervention. However, to implement an AI model more effectively, consideration must be given to evidence-based practices as a foundation of his model that is also covered by outcome measures to guide, or drive, AI.

The next chapter will include my conceptual framework and comprehensive literature review of possible research methods and a case study review. Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology used to explore my research question with the data analysis presented in Chapter 4. The final chapter will contain the discussion of the findings and study conclusion.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 is a literature review, relevant to explore the research topic of how AI practitioners determine the impact of an AI and establish research methods to explore the topic. This chapter, first, provides an overview of AI followed by a discussion of an industry deficit in AI impact determination. Included are the research terms used in the foundation of the study and the theoretical frameworks used to support the key determinants of impact that emerged from the research. Following the study purpose review is an evaluation of methodological options and a brief description of each of the types of research methods considered for the study. Through the literature review process, exploratory case study was identified as the most appropriate method. Following the method identification are reviews of three published AI case studies analyzed to identify how OD practitioners are self-describing their methods to determine the impact of an AI.

Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature

Literature Review of Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is an approach to organization analysis and learning that facilitates discovering, understanding, and fostering innovations in social organizational arrangements and processes (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008). First introduced as an alternative to the managerial deficit-based, traditional OD methodologies, AI invited holistic participation from the entire organization to create positive-based shared dreams and visions to form a positive core to serve as the foundation to the change agenda. Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) introduced AI as a conceptual reconfiguration of action research that was primarily based on the organization’s generative capacity. The theory of generativity was first introduced by Robert Epstein in the early 1980’s as a formal, predictive theory of creative behavior in individuals. This theory was exemplified in the work of Epstein, Lanza, and Rubin’s (1984) publication “Insight” in the
Pigeon: Antecedents and Determinants of an Intelligent Performance where they suggested creativity as a skill that can be learned through the concept strategies of challenging, broadening, surrounding, and capturing. In this article, the authors described a process of interconnection that is orderly and predictable that was used to mathematically derive what was termed transformation functions that could predict novel, creative behavior for both animals and humans. Gergen (1978, 1982) was the first to describe the generative theory on which AI is based in terms of using the scientific method to understand human relations and generative potency. In his theoretical critique, Gergen (1978) stated “much contemporary theory appears to lack generative potency, that is, the capacity to challenge the prevailing assumptions regarding the nature of social life and to offer fresh alternatives” (p. 1344). At this time the practice of AI was structured on four basic principles of appreciation, collaboration, provocativeness, and applicability and would eventually evolve into the 4-D Cycle Model (Cooperrider, 1997). Modern practitioners and researchers support generativity as the transformational component of AI (Bright, Powley, Fry, & Barrett, 2013; Bushe, 2007, 2010).

The positive core of AI represents the affirmative topic choices identified in the initial phases of an intervention and directs the Cooperrider 4-D Cycle Model (1997). The cycle steps begin with discovery of what gives life to an organization; the best of what is. The discovery step is also known as appreciating. Question to the participants would be directed towards uncovering what is working within the organization, between departments, and with external factors. The next step is dream, or what might be, and is called envisioning. From the dream step the participants determine how to create the ideal through constructing in the design phase. The final step is destiny, or identifying what will be; sustaining. The original 4-D Cycle Model had the fourth step as delivery but was changed by Cooperrider to move consultants away from the
traditional change management practices. It is this change that has left the industry ambiguous with interventions that can be inconsistent (Bushe, 2011).

Figure 2. Graphic representation of the 4-D-Cycle model by Cooperrider (2012).

Criticism of AI from scholars came in three waves (Bushe, 2012). First, OD scholars posited a balance between the organization’s positive and dysfunction was more conducive to valid diagnosis of the organization’s health and that AI was anti-research (Golembiewski, 1998, 2000). Second, from the perspective of social constructionism, scholars did not seem to comprehend AI as being more than asking positive questions and experiencing positive emotions. Bushe (2012) gave examples of critics in this second wave such as Fineman (2006) and Grant and Humphries (2006). The third wave came “from scholar practitioners who seem sympathetic to AI but more aware of its limitations” (Bushe, 2012, p. 15). The concern in this wave was that sharing positive stories and experiences in the discovery phase would overshadow the negative experiences and possibly prevent meaningful conversations that should happen (Barge & Oliver, 2003; Egan & Lancaster, 2005; Fitzgerald, Oliver & Hoaxey, 2010; Miller, Fitzgerald, Murrell, Preston & Ambekar, 2005; Oliver, 2005; Pratt, 2002; Reason, 2000).
McArthur-Blair and Cockell (2012) presented the concept of Critical Appreciative Inquiry (CAI) as a means to combine social constructivism, critical theory, and appreciative inquiry into a new model for leaders to consider in their application of AI processes and principles. Critical theory refers to changes in society as a whole, appreciative inquiry is the change process, and social constructivism is the premise that learning, or change, cannot happen outside the context of social experiences. Amalgamation of these into CAI presents a new ideology of how an AI practitioner would determine impact. These authors purpose this model as a means for social change, or specifically, over the limitations of individual or organizational change. The premise of CAI was the foundation to the conceptual model presented in chapter one. From this study, the exploration of how AI practitioners determine impact should be relatable to individuals, organizations, and society as a whole. Therefore, looking at the perspective of a societal change should make the key determinants not only pertinent to practice, but applicable to any scale of AI.

Regardless of the tenet under which a practitioner performs an AI, five core principles arise from their philosophical premises. According to Cooperrider and Srivasta (1987), these core principles are:

1. Constructivist principle states that words create worlds, where reality is socially created through language and conversation;
2. Simultaneity principle states that inquiry creates change where the very act of asking a question creates a change, and questions are fateful;
3. Anticipatory principle states that images inspire action, where the more positive the image, the more positive the actions.
4. Poetic principle states that we can choose what we study, even as teams or
organizations, which may function to describe and create our worlds;

5. Positive principle states that positive questions lead to positive change; momentum requires positive affect and social bonding, and is best generated through positive questions to amplify the positive core.

**Literature Review for Research Method**

Historically, OD has occurred through a system of metrics used to diagnose the health of an organizational system. Standards were set and rigid boundaries measured success or failure. The term used to describe this type of change theory is *Diagnostic organization development*. The past 20 years have moved systems into a more holistic evaluation of organizational practices requiring more conversations about what is working, what is not working, and why. Strategic shifts in thinking have come from the need to identify the “how” and “why” more so than the “whether or not” in order to effect whole system change. Bushe and Marshak (2015) began to identify and define this new way of thinking about and conducting OD and termed it *Dialogic organization development*. Centered squarely on the foundations of diagnostic OD, dialogic OD moves towards including the individual and group conversations about the inner workings of the organization, as well as the pitfalls. The hard numbers of daily operation are important to evaluate, but having the whole picture to understand why they show the values they do may be more credible to understanding where change needs to be implemented and which practices should be developed.

AI has been an organization development strategy since the late 1980’s that “deliberately seeks to discover people’s exceptionality – their unique gifts, strengths, and qualities . . . [AI] builds momentum and success because it believes in people” (Cooperrider, 2001, p. 12). AI is a theoretical, holistic change practice that leads “systems to move toward the generative and
creative images that reside in their most positive core – their values, visions, achievements, and best practices” (Watkins & Mohr, 2001, pp. xxxi-xxxii). However, change leadership needs to be able to evolve with organizational practices. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) modified their 4-D Model to include a new stage one, Definition, to define the project purpose and identify what the AI will focus on, creating the 5-D Process Model for AI.

Figure 3. Graphic representation of the 5-D-Cycle model by Cooperrider (2005).

Part of the evolution explored in contemporary literature is a common call to action for empirical, critical analysis of the theory and practices of AI (Bushe, 1998; Bushe & Marshak, 2011, 2014, 2015; Clarke, n.d.; Conklin, 2009; Grant & Humphries, 2006; Hart, Conklin, & Allen, 2008; Kessler, 2013; Willoughby & Tosey, 2007). McNamara identified “historical attempts to have more efficient organizations were missing several essential ingredients, especially the distinction between content—where most of the above ‘consulting’ almost certainly focused—and process, something yet to be discovered” (par 15, italics in original). Bushe and Marshak (2015) reported that most book and journal published case studies almost
always deem as successes, whereas studies of actual success rates of any change efforts are well below 50% (Beer, Eisenstat, & Spector, 1990; Zackrison & Freedman, 2003).

Given the current trends in OD and the movement away from the structured practices of traditional OD and the lack of a theoretical framework for the contemporary OD practices, a new research problem exists in how to articulate a unifying theory of change and bridge the academics and practitioners. Few researchers (Grant & Humphries, 2006; McArthur-Blair & Cockell, 2014; Preskill & Catsambas, 2006; Ridley-Duff & Duncan, 2013) have addressed the need to better define the AI practitioner processes combining features of Grounded Theory, Critical Inquiry, and Appreciative Inquiry into what is being called Critical Appreciative Processes (CAP). However, as the methods used to define AI processes are evolving, measures of how practitioners determine organizational impact from an AI intervention remain absent.

The entire Spring 2017 issue of the *OD Practitioner Journal of the Organization Development Network* was dedicated to demonstrating the impact of organization development. The intent was to challenge and inspire practitioners to expand their methods with more rigors in the identification of intervention impacts (Tartell & Vogel, 2017, p. 5). The contributing authors expended effort to explore how a practitioner could measure results; emphasize the importance of having both objective and subjective outcomes; identify issues, dilemmas, and unintended consequences associated with measurement and evaluation; and professional development.

The introductory editorial notes for the spring 2017 issue by Tartell and Vogel reported the response to their call for papers to be fascinating and indicative of an industry gap by the lack of willing participants and comments that evaluations are not done, or their area of expertise. The editor’s experience mirrors my observation while reviewing the literature in that there is, currently, a deficiency of research that exists indicating how practitioners are determining the
impact of an AI intervention. This study attempts to answer how OD practitioners determine the impact of an AI intervention.

**Literature Review for Key Determinants of Impact**

During the study, three determinants of impact became evident: cognitive changes, paradigm changes, and behavior changes. Through the initial review of literature regarding cognitive changes, the bifurcation of cognition became known to the researcher as doxastic logic and epistemic logic. Doxastic logic relating to how one feels about something and epistemic logic relating to how one thinks. Another concept important to cognitive changes that emerged was energy during the AI process. Schippers and Hogenes (2011) reported their findings from a literature review of energy and motivation that energy, as a concept, is implied throughout motivational theories without much actual research on it, or specific mention in studies. Most participants in this study mentioned energy as a criterion for determining impact though they were unable to quantify or really qualify its meaning.

Energy can be defined as a positive, affective arousal experienced as a short response to specific events such as emotions, or as longer-lasting affective states, as with moods, that may or may not be related to a specific event (Quinn & Dutton, 2005). Additional support for the definition of energy was posited by Spreitzer et al. (2005) where energy is experienced as a psychological state which provides a sense of vitality and learning. Due to the emphasis placed on the energy shifts during the AI process, I agree with Hobfoll (1989) that energy is a valued resource that people strive to retain, protect, and/or gain. Maslach et al. (2001) described three kinds of energy dimensions that, though similar, are exact opposites of dimensions of burnout that include physical energy as related to strength, endurance, and flexibility, mental energy and the ability to intensely focus, and emotional energy with connection to one’s own feelings and
core values. Additional expansion of this energy dimension discussion included energy characteristics regarding the amount of energy, stability of that energy, and the direction of the energy. The notion was also presented that energy is contagious: happy people increase the energy flow, or gains, and sad people can decrease the energy flow as seen with motivational speakers.

Shippers and Hogenes (2011) presented three forms of energy theories in their literature review to describe energy gains that included engagement, thriving, and human flourishing. Energy gains through engagement were described by Gonzalez-Roma et al. (2006) and Schaufell et al. (2002) that create a positive work-related state, and are characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Spreitzer et al. (2005) defined energy gains through thriving as a psychological state that provides individuals with a sense of vitality and learning. Human flourishing is the ability to live within an optimal range of human functioning so as to promote goodness, generativity, growth, and resilience (Fredrickson & Lasada, 2005).

Another critical element in the literature was the concept of mentalizing. Fonagy and Allison (2014) defined mentalizing as the capacity to understand behavior in terms of mental states and using that understanding to define social and psychological achievement. Mentalizing was presented as a generic way to establish authenticity and personal relevance of interpersonally transmitted information. It is through mentalization that people are able to learn socially from new experiences to achieve change through understanding social relationships and their own behavior. The authors deemed mentalization as the trigger for learning from social knowledge, which could change their self-perceptions and their social world. I deemed the understanding of energy and the flow of energy, as well as the concept of mentalization, as an important consideration in this study for effectively describing the key determinants of impact.
As people become energized, they are having energy gains that will help with feelings of motivation. The integration of how people feel about something and what they think of it are what I believe to be the first step in making cognitive change.

Mindset changes or paradigm shifts were the second key determinant identified in this study. Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly (2011) referred to a revolution from deficit-based OD practices to using AI as a way of seeing and being in the world. Where Cooperrider and Srivasta (1989) introduced AI practices as a process model, these authors defined the AI process as a compass for exploration, rapid prototyping, and periodic discovery through continuous dialogue. Attempting to add to the shift in AI from an academic interest founded in grounded theory to an orientation and philosophical base, the authors presented three interconnected concepts to define modern AI practices.

1. AI as a philosophy of knowledge and how people come to understand their world;
2. AI as a principle-based intervention theory where the primary focus is how language, dialogue, and story are key to social construction of reality;
3. when AI is entrenched within its own philosophy and intervention theory, it can be molded with any process or methodology of OD.

These interconnected concepts helped to reinforce the three key determinants of cognitive change as related to the first concept, paradigm change as related to the second concept, and behavior change as related to the third concept.

The third key determinant evidenced from this study was behavior change. This determinant also bifurcated into individual behavior and organizational behavior. Davis, et al. (2014) further delineated behavior by identifying a gap between theories of behavior and theories of change. These authors described theories of behavior from works by Agar (2008), Conner and
Norman (2005), Glanz and Rimer (1997), and Head and Noar (2013) as linear and that antecedents could be identified and used to predict or influence other behavior. The work of these researchers aligned with the work of Epstein and Kirshnit (1984) and the insight gleaned from pigeons. In contrast to theories of behavior, theories of change were described as being more cyclical and used to identify interactional and dynamic behavior change processes as found in the works of Agar (2008) and Head and Noar (2013). Davis, et al. (2014) related the difficulties distinguishing between theories of behavior and theories change, suggesting that some theoretical frameworks could incorporate both behavior and change. The combination of behavior and change theories impact behavior through change, and change occurs through behavior.

Further research revealed two key considerations for organizational change. Aside from the need for individual changes to impact organizational change, organizational changes could occur at a micro level and a macro level. Definitions of these two levels of organizational change were explored on Investopedia. The micro level includes cognition, decision making, learning, motivation, negotiation, impressions, group process, stereotyping, and power and influence. The micro level or organizational change proved to be supportive of the relationship between cognitive change, paradigm change, and behavior change and lent support to the validity of these three key determinants of impact. The macro level of organizational change refers to whole systems changes as referred to social systems, the dynamics of change, markets, relationships between organizations and their environments, and identity in organizational processes. Reference was also made to how social movements within an organization may influence markets and the power of social networks from a macro level perspective. Another aspect of organizational change from the study that became worthy of further literature review was the
practitioner emphasis on building a common language as part of the AI process. West (n.d.) identified a building block of efficient organizational functioning and employee satisfaction as effective communication. She explained how the most effective strategy for effective communication is to have a common language.

**Review of Methodologies**

The intent of this section is to evaluate the methods used to determine impact of AI and methodology of the analysis. Quantitative data is generally gathered in laboratory-designed experiments and surveys, and often represented in tables, graphs, or charts, as in many of the social and all of the natural science investigations (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative data, however, is descriptive in nature using open-ended questions or case studies. As it is, quantitative research is a “means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables,… whereas, . . . qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). Within this continuum between quantitative and qualitative methodology is the blending of the two into what is called mixed-methods including all of the philosophical assumptions, the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and variants of a mixing of these approaches.

**Program Evaluation as a Research Method**

Program evaluation provides a systematic approach to the collection of various forms of data to identify the whys and wherefores of varying operational factors that have an impact on the efficacy and efficiency of an organization. Powell (2006) defined evaluation “as a type of study that uses standard social research methods for evaluative purposes, as a specific research methodology, and as an assessment process that employs special techniques unique to the evaluation of social programs” (p. 102). Evaluation methods can be an input measurement,
impact/outcomes assessment, service quality assessment, process evaluation, benchmarking, standards, quantitative methods, qualitative methods, cost analysis, organizational effectiveness, and program evaluation methods. This methods list is comprehensive but, by no means, exhaustive. Evaluation research has the ability to “enhance knowledge and decision making and lead to practical applications” (p. 102).

It is within this applicability of program evaluation as a research method that I intend to employ it for my study. As the field of OD continues to evolve and implement new strategies it becomes imperative to decipher the efficacy of change leader actions and maintain field practices that are conducive to furthering evaluative research and knowledge for all. This particular method will be a key strategy used to inform the construction of my survey.

**Comparative Analysis of Case Studies**

Comparative analysis considers data across the different case studies as a means of identifying similarities and differences to “refine the development of theoretical categories” (Gibbs, et al., 2011, para. 21). The literature reviewed for comparative data analysis in this paper is of case studies about the practice of appreciative inquiry. The case studies are action research employed as a “systematic enquiry designed to yield practical results capable of improving a specific aspect of practice and made public to enable scrutiny and testing” (Gibbs, et al., 2011, para. 2). This research study will employ a literature review of three published AI case studies to identify how OD practitioners are self-describing their methods, including defining and measuring success with the organizations for whom they are consulting.

**Case Study as a Research Method**

Case study research method has been defined by Yin (1984) “as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries
between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (p. 23). Both single-case and multiple-case study designs can have limitations due to the inability to repeat the scenario for scientific verification, therefore, it is important to triangulate the studies to provide greater validity of the process; especially for single-case studies. When using a multiple-case study design, with various sources of data from real-life events provides adequate evidence through the replication of the study over sampling logic. This replication process allows for pattern-matching to link study data to theoretical propositions to raise confidence and robustness (Zainal, 2007, p. 2).

Survey Response

Survey response encompasses all of the research methods that involve asking questions to the participants, whether by questionnaire or direct interview or any combination, thereof. In the field of social sciences, survey responses have become a measurement cornerstone for holistic data gathering considering perceptions, cultural climate, and an organization as a whole. “Survey research is aimed primarily at tapping the subjective feelings of the public...[and collecting] numerous facts about the behaviors and situations of people that can be obtained only by asking a sampling of people about themselves” (Fowler, 2013, p. 2). Surveys can be hampered by actual participant completion, honesty of the answers, and individuals wanting to portray a different image than what are actually the correct scenario details. In this study, survey responses will be used with a possible follow up interview to gather more information and clarification of the individual’s perspective and perceptions of efficacy of the AI.

Case Study Critique

As previously stated, Bushe and Marshak (2015) reported that most book and journal published case studies are almost always deemed as successes, although studies of actual success
rates of any change efforts are well below 50% (Beer, Eisenstat & Spector, 1990; Zackrison & Freedman, 2003). Studies that explore successes and failures of AI are needed to help explain moderators and contingencies that influence AI outcomes (Grant, 2006; Grant & Humphries, 2006; Head, 2005). Additionally, some facilitators are more successful at leading an AI than others. Merely following the formulas prescribed for running an inquiry is no guarantee that successful, transformational changes will occur. In fact, Bushe (2007) reported findings of seemingly good AI summits with little actual change whilst other, less generative summits effect more change. Dematteo and Reeves (2011) recounted in their examination of an interprofessional initiative that participants reported having high levels of energy and enthusiasm as a result of AI. However, they also described problems within the same study, which included the participant’s ability to translate the “AI process into achievable structural level (e.g., professional, cultural) changes” (abstract, example in original text) limiting meaningful, lasting change. For these reasons, three case studies were critiqued and included in this literature review. These studies provide foundational groundwork to determine whether an AI was successful and to help structure the scope of this study, as well as the interview questions that would be asked.

The first case is a meta-case analysis of studies published prior to 2003 attempting to change social systems. Inclusion of the meta-case analysis in the literature review was important as it depicts the deficits in AI practices and processes discovered during independent research. Creswell (2008) defined meta-analysis as "a type of research report in which the author integrates the findings of many [primary source] research studies" (p. 642). A meta-analysis encompasses creating research criteria, an exhaustive search of the literature, coding each appropriate article for researcher-determined variables, and compiling the findings into one concise document with its own conclusions. Researchers conducting the meta-analysis created a
variable matrix which provided a basis for confirming successful AI as related to outcome measures and defined by the Five Principles of AI and the 4-D AI Process Model. This study was the first of its kind to evaluate whether the reported findings of an AI case study had merit in their claim within the AI framework. The meta-analysis was focused on the evaluation of outcome measures so two more case studies were reviewed in an attempt to replicate the use of the variable matrix with a study that had been conducted with known outcome measures and one that did not. In these case study reviews, the protocols of each study are outlined and briefly discussed to demonstrate the comparative quality between them and how the matrix can be used to delineate successes when outcome measures are pre-determined for a study and when they are not. The matrix tool, when applied to each of the subsequent studies, underscores the need for more refined methods of determining impact, which supports my research topic. Another value of understanding the application of the variable matrix is to evaluate the key determinants of impact in this study as seen in chapter five.

**Literature Review AI Case Study #1**

In the publication entitled, *When is Appreciative Inquiry Transformations? A Meta-Case Analysis* (Bushe & Kassam, 2005) the authors posited the increasing popularity of AI as an OD change method in spite of the lack of research evaluating its efficacy. Their efforts where focused on whether AI created a transformation within the organization. In this study, the authors collected 20 success-touted case studies that utilized AI by collecting positive stories and adhering to Cooperrider and Whitney’s (2001) 4-D Model and the Five Principles of AI.

The authors discussed intervention models and processes of AI. The most noted intervention model is Cooperrider and Whitney’s (1999) 4-D cycle of Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. There are two other AI processes that set it apart from other forms of OD
explored in this study. The first is a figurative idea from Gestalt therapy in that traditional OD makes new \textit{things} and AI makes new \textit{ground}, which makes room for more possibilities in the way people think and the things they do. The \textit{ground} part of this idea is easier to define because it is more tangible. However, the figurative \textit{things} are more difficult to explain because, “(g)round is about the substructure that influences what people think and do” (Bushe & Kassam, 2005, p. 168).

This analysis evaluated whether AI helped construct new ground, or not. In other words, through the dialogues, did new knowledge come about as a direct result of AI that had the potential of changing other ways of thinking and acting as opposed to an AI which did not expand with the dialogues, rather pinned a specific key issue and stayed focused there throughout the intervention. More simply stated was AI transformation for the organization, or not.

The second AI process that sets it apart from other forms of OD is the avoidance of “creating plans and processes for implementing agreed-upon changes and rather to create plans and processes that encourage and nurture improvised action by system members” (Bushe & Kassam, 2005, p. 168). Some AI practitioners avoid standards associated with traditional change consulting. The mindset for this laissez-faire intervention is for AI to create a set of images and ideas so compelling to participants they voluntarily seek to transform their social and work processes. The author’s caveat described in the discussion of the improvisational approach to AI is that it is not widespread, and nearly “absent from the work of Watkins and Mohr (2001) and Elliott (1999) and has not been described very clearly in practice in most writing on AI” (p. 169).
Literature review case study #1 method. This case study began in 2002 and only reviewed 20 published cases that were deemed appropriate with enough information to warrant inclusion. The authors considered eight variables under examination in each of the 20 cases:

1. Transformational change (yes or no). This was, in a sense, our dependent measure.
2. Outcome was new knowledge versus simply new processes (knowledge or processes).
3. Intervention created a generative metaphor (yes or no).
4. Intervention adhered to the nine principles of AI (yes or no for each principle).
5. Intervention followed the 4-D cycle (yes or no for each D).
6. Intervention began with collecting stories of the affirmative topic (yes or no).
7. Intervention focused on figure or on ground (figure or ground)
8. Intervention concluded with implementation or improvisation (implementation or improvisation).

Using decision rules with the variables, a matrix containing 19 cells for each case was created. Both authors conducted independent reads of the cases with a > 96% agreement rate. The cases provided a 94% completion rate for the matrix with only 17 of the 380 total matrix cell unable to be completed, 14 of which referred to the nondescript poetic principle.

Literature review case study #1 results. Though not perfect, Bushe and Kassam (2005) considered the 20 selected cases to be successful examples of AI and transformational change. The authors pointed out that nearly all published cases are success stories for reasons previously identified through the work of Mirvis and Berg (1977). However, the variation between these successful cases could be more significant than whether the positive claim was made.

In the matrix analysis, only 35% of the cases were rated as transformational change. Less than half of the successful AI cases were not lead much differently than other competently
managed change processes (p. 171). Ironically, cases that had specific transformational outcomes described changes that could not be causally linked to the planned change efforts, rather more attributable to adaptations brought about by external forces. Results such as these may lead to a false impression that transformation can only come from these types of scenarios.

Another takeaway from the study was the lack of variation of interest on three categories (numbers 4, 5, and 6). All but one case used the 4-D cycle with fidelity, and all cases remained within the nine principles of AI. Story collection was, also, done for all cases. However, though initiating and moving through AI was very consistent among the cases, they began to splinter on the outcome and intervention process variables. Summarizing the outcome and intervention process variables as they relate to the reported change provided striking results, as seen below:

Cases Reporting Transformational Outcomes:

1. 100% created new knowledge,
2. 100% created a generative metaphor,
3. 100% penetrated the ground of the organization, and
4. 83% used an improvisational approach to the destiny phase.
Cases not Reporting Transformational Outcomes:

1. 0% created new knowledge,
2. 8% created a generative metaphor,
3. 8% penetrated the ground of the organization, and
4. 16% used an improvisational approach to the destiny phase.

This meta-case study shows that having outcome variables as part of the AI process leads to transformational change that can be correlated to the intervention.

**Literature Review AI Case Study #2**

The article entitled *Appreciative Inquiry Case Study: Experian Command Center* (Poole & Jedd, n.d.) was the culmination of a three-year AI as Experian faced increased performance expectations from a new executive leadership team. Over this time period AI was utilized in more than one capacity and described as being successful. Though the study ended in 2004 there is no indication of the actual publication date.

Toole and Jedd (n.d.) became internal consultants to the leadership team as a means of meeting organizational objectives. They began with a competency modeling initiative; resistance to change was apparent when all managers did not show up for a competency validation meeting, citing they were simply not on the same page for the reason. The consultants were scheduled to attend an unrelated AI training the following month, which led to their choice to bring this change method to the Command Center.

**Literature review case study #2 method.** To create leadership buy in for AI a meeting was held to provide an introduction and demonstration of structured interviews. This resulted in concrete actions necessary to achieving their strategy. The leadership team committed two people per shift and all of the leadership team to attend a four-day AI. The most significant
outcome of this meeting was the realization of leadership unanimity for the proposed business strategy. Through selective interview and theme development processes the participants presented creative enactments, wrote design statements, created innovative teams, and outlined follow up activities. Six themes were created from this process to include: Recognition, Training Program, Standardization, Organizational Evolution, Communication, and Teamwork.

Participants were given a surprise party at the end of the AI to celebrate their achievements.

**Literature review case study #2 results.** Toole and Jedd repeated one and a half day sessions for all employees to experience the 4-D model, which led to better communication and continued appreciative dialogue became standard within the Command Center. Within the first year the organization met the mandated performance targets. “What had been a fearful, contentious organization was now a high functioning, collaborative team. The Command Center employees and management were aligned in their approach to achieving the performance mandates. Employee engagement was high. Communication and dialogue was significantly increased” (p. 3). In the following two years, Toole and Jedd continued to apply AI with organizational initiatives and documented transformational changes in all areas, which included: Cross Organizational Collaboration, The Shift “Problem”, Appreciative Leadership, and New System Implementation.

Reading this case study using the variable matrix created by Bushe and Kassam (2005), it was easy to determine AI as a direct determinant for organizational transformation. The researchers implemented the 4-D model and evidence could be derived that the nine principles of AI were adhered to during the intervention. The Command Center outcomes included new social processes and a generative metaphor as demonstrated during the initial leadership AI structured
interviews. The initial induction to AI created a common language and direction for the organization and new possibilities for action.

**Literature Review AI Case Study # 3**

The publication entitled *A Case Study Demonstrating the Use of Appreciative Inquiry in a Financial Coaching Program* (Delgadillo, Palmer, & Goetz, 2016) is from the December 2016 Utah State University Family, Consumer, and Human Development Faculty Publications. The article, categorized as a *single, instrumental, and pragmatic case study* that describes a real (not hypothetical) example of the use of Appreciative Inquiry under the umbrella of a Solution Focused approach” (Delgadillo, Palmer, & Goetz, 2016, p. 4, italics in original text). The author’s objective was to demonstrate the first step towards development and incorporation of AI in financial services. The second step would be efficacy assessment of AI approach to financial coaching.

**Literature review case study #3 method.** A single, voluntary client was offered three complimentary financial coaching sessions for participation in the study. Initial intake included the collection of information from the participant and distribution of a financial wheel, which was based on the Wheel of Life tool by Coaching Training Institute (n.d.).

The subject rated their satisfaction level from a scale of zero to ten with ten being highest. The scores were plotted on their spokes of the wheel to provide a visual representation of the subject’s perception of exterior finances; the numerical aspects of money. The participant represented herself as financially sound. However, the purpose of the study was to demonstrate how AI could be applied during financial coaching, not to change the financial status of the subject. The researchers proceeded to conduct AI and completed the objective of the study.
Literature review case study #3 results. The case study adapted the AI 5-D model as an intervention tool for financial coaching. Unable to draw generalizable conclusions from a single case, the author’s are not clear on the efficacy of this method for development of long-term financial health. They did, however, report their confidence in this demonstration “as the first step in the ongoing process of providing future empirical data” (Delgadillo, Palmer, & Goetz, 2016, p. 18). Appreciative Inquiry was designated as an alternative framework with guiding principle to be used when coaching maladaptive money practices. Predicted efficacy was based on AI being solution focused with positive language, forward looking, and strengths based. Future considerations identified focus areas for financial professionals, which include the AI discovery stage, the client’s positive core and the constructionist principle to develop the generative process.

This case study did not claim a transformational change but did meet the objective of demonstrating how AI could be applied in a financial service setting, and therefore claimed success. Reading this case study using the variable matrix created by Bushe and Kassam (2005), it was easy to determine AI was not a direct determinant for organizational transformation. The researchers implemented the 5-D model and evidence of the nine principles of AI was demonstrated in the process. The author’s mentioned outcomes, which would include new knowledge and a generative process (metaphor).

My analysis of this case study, using the decision rules and variable matrix concurs with the trends in the relationship between the variables considered and the magnitude of transformational change reported. Specifically, this study did not create new knowledge, though presented the importance of generative processes (metaphors). The article revealed a single,
particular outcome goal making the argument for this to be an implementation over an improvisational approach to the destiny phase.

**Synthesis of Research Literature and Methodological Literature**

Over time, researchers have posed many schools of thought and advances to theory as practitioners have worked, studied, consulted, and re-theorized the fundamentals of OD. Current literature on the trends of OD indicates an evolution that needs to be clearly defined and standardized to make the application of Dialogic OD to current field practices and measurement of results attainable, as well as understood by all. Bushe and Marshak (2015) are working to define this trend and describe Dialogic OD as a bifurcation of the field while others (Elwin, 2017; Grant & Humphries, 2012; McArthur-Blair & Cockell, 2012) are attempting to define AI processes that meld AI with Grounded Theory and Critical Theory principles to provide an approach for assessing AI as an action research method for societal change. However, an unexplored component of AI is the assessment of the organizational successes as a direct result of AI, or how to determine the impact of AI. Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly (2014) expand the theories of AI, again, by introducing three interconnected concepts to be used as a compass to guide a perpetual process. In this model AI has embedded its own philosophies of knowledge, a new understanding of the dialogic social construction of reality, and this model’s application to any process or methodology for OD.

The review of how AI practitioners determine impact revealed three key determinants: cognitive change, paradigm change, and behavior change. To better understand how to describe these changes and whether they were appropriate for use as impact determinants, additional literature regarding theories of cognition, energy, behavior, change, and additional AI practice concepts were reviewed. Discoveries were made in cognition that bifurcated this determinant
into how people feel (doxastic logic) and how they think (epistemic logic). Understanding the integration of how a person feels and how they think are important to understanding motivation and promoting change. A component of the two logics integration process is the energy or psychological status of a person as they have an experience and gains in energy can promote positive affective arousal as seen with emotions (doxastic logic). Energy is a valued resource that can be described by type of energy: physical, mental, and emotional; dimension of energy: engagement, thriving, and human flourishing; and characteristics of energy: amount, stability, and direction or flow.

Another component of integrating doxastic and epistemic logic is the process of mentalizing, defined as the capacity to understand behavior in terms of mental states for oneself and others. Mentalizing can be used to define social and psychological achievement and is a generic way to establish authenticity and personal relevance of interpersonally transmitted information. Fonagy and Allison (2014) went as far as describing the experience for an individual of having their subjectivity understood (mentalized) as the trigger for receiving and learning from social knowledge that can change our personal perceptions and those of our social world. Theories of behavior and theories of change were considered and determined to be contrasted by processes where theories of behavior are mostly linear with recognizable antecedents that can explain and predict behavior and theories of change are more cyclical and dependent on interactional and dynamic behavior change processes. However, a blending of these two theories are necessary for transformational change as is seen with paradigm changes. Another aspect of the study revealed the need to research the concept of an organizational common language. The literature review proved common language to be the best communication
strategy and effective communication a critical component to efficient organizational functioning and employee satisfaction.

A final section of the literature review was an exploration of how researchers were attempting to determine impact of AI. Bushe & Kassam (2005) published a meta-analysis of case studies using a matrix to categorize components of the published works as to what could be identified as having transformational change. From this matrix they determined four specific categories common to the studies that reported transformational outcomes, as listed below.

Cases Reporting Transformational Outcomes:

1. 100% created new knowledge,
2. 100% created a generative metaphor,
3. 100% penetrated the ground of the organization, and
4. 83% used an improvisational approach to the destiny phase.

This matrix was applied to all three case studies reviewed in this chapter and to the research results for a cross comparative analysis in chapter five.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 is a literature review, relevant to the exploration of the research question and the key determinants of impact that emerged from the study. This chapter identified the exploratory case study method to be most appropriate to investigate how AI practitioners determine the impact of an AI intervention. This chapter also comprehensively reviewed three published AI case studies analyzed to identify how OD practitioners are self-describing their methods to determine the impact of an AI intervention.

Analysis of AI processes from the three reviewed AI case studies in this chapter and categorizing the variables determined to be valuable in the determination of transformational
change in each case can be used to identify best field practices and outcome measures. Using these parameters could begin the foundation of AI contingency planning and design. The lack of this structure in the vast majority of published case studies strengthens the need to address the research topic of the need and ability to depict how an AI impact could be identified.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction and Research Question

Bridging effective techniques and coherent theoretical frameworks are important to furthering industry scholarship and practices. Determining how AI practitioners identify organizational impact is the next direction in the AI field of study and the focus of this dissertation. Bushe (2013) previously introduced that practitioners might identify the impact of an AI through a single-case study analysis of “moderating and mediating conditions that effect how AI is best done and under what conditions, opportunities, and limitations” (p. 5). The primary analysis focused on the evidence of outcome measures the practitioners use as they employ AI.

This chapter is a description of methodology to answer how an AI practitioner determines the impact of an AI intervention. Methodology includes research design, methods, data collection, and analysis. This chapter is first organized with a description of the research method that directs the study, followed by the research population and sampling method. Next, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures are addressed. Finally, limitations of the research design, validation, expected findings, and ethical issues are discussed before concluding with the methodology summary.

Purpose and Design of the Study

The method determined for use in this study was a qualitative, bound, exploratory, single-case study. Study type selection was made as an attempt is to explore and understand the “meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems” (Creswell, 2014, p. 6). This research addresses a how question making case study most appropriate (Yin, 2014) and without being able to identify any studies about how practitioners determine intervention impact.
this research is defined as exploratory (Arthur, et al., 2012; Yin, 2014). This study is bounded since the participants solicited for the survey and interviews must be members of specific networking groups or industry associations. The study is also bounded by time since it must be completed within the constraints imposed to complete my dissertation. Those who are asked to participate are a smaller group than the total of all industry professionals, which limits, or bounds, this to a single-case study (Yin, 2014). However, creating knowledge and understanding are significant values of case study (Timmons & Cairns, 2011) and should endeavor to “understand an issue or problem using the case as a specific illustration” (Creswell, 2014, p. 73).

A primary purpose of exploratory case study approach is to construct a meaningful understanding of the industry assessment practices that would not necessarily be suspect to numerical analysis (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Yin (2009) articulated, “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (pp.16-17). The study design affords the opportunity to blend the technical, hermeneutic, and emancipatory knowledge by exploring the experiences of the AI practitioners from their own perspectives, making the work meaningful or purposeful (Creswell, 2014). Appreciative Inquiry case studies are used to improve specific aspects of practice making this research method most appropriate to explore how practitioners determine impact.

**Research Population and Sampling Method**

It is imperative to have a clear purpose and multiple data sources in case study research. The overarching standards to support the research goal are the elimination of researcher bias, rival explanations, and unethical behavior (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). Favorable researcher attributes defined by Yin (2014) include asking good questions with fair interpretations; listening
to responses openly; maintain adaptability in the study with new information; acquire a firm understanding of the topic being investigated; avoid biases with contrary evidence; and know how to conduct research ethically.

This interview method allows for guided, similar questioning while allowing flexibility in the dialogue based on the participants experiences and level of comfort with the questions. In-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience and provides necessary avenue of inquiry (Seidman, 2006, p.11). The semistructured interviews were recorded for accuracy as a best practice to stay true to their words and responses during transcription (Cohen & Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The recordings were uploaded to www.Temi.com for transcription.

During the design part of the protocol development, electronic correspondence with 10 critical colleagues was initiated with responses from three who agreed to provide feedback about the topic. Critical colleagues were not part of the interview participants; however, they are active and knowledgeable members of the AI professional community. Their purpose was to engage in discussions regarding the structure and clarity of the research question and whether the research question could be meaningful to AI practice and theory construction. These critical colleagues piloted interview questions early in the research, without a fixed agenda, and provided feedback as an external observer (Yin, 2014, p. 97). What was most helpful with the critical colleague discussions was the ability to ascertain the data pertinent to the case study and what could be omitted, which was important while honing the questions.

The participant sample for this study was purposeful, which involved identifying and selecting individuals who were especially knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), namely the impact determinants of AI.
Therefore, the participants selected have used AI as their primary method of OD for at least three years. This technique is used in qualitative research when identifying and selecting information-rich cases, thus affording effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). “In addition to knowledge and experience, Bernard (2002) and Spradley (1979) note the importance of availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner” (Palinkas, 2015).

Preliminary participant recruiting efforts were targeted at obtaining four AI practitioners and their business partners for the AI consultation they felt they had an impact, as described in the research proposal. However, due to confidentiality restrictions on the part of the practitioners, they were unable to solicit their business partners for this study. Therefore, the study focus changed to remain on the practitioners, alone. This change in the recruiting focus was not made until after the initial recruitment efforts with the hope it would open the door to more participants in the second request for participants. The intent, with this change, was to have eight AI practitioners in the study instead of four practitioners and four business partners.

Initial recruitment of participants was done by posting a research participant request through LinkedIn and The Taos Institute websites (see Appendix A). Both of these websites have dedicated networks of AI practitioners making recruitment efforts specifically targeted. Five potential and qualified participants responded, however, two were unable to complete the study due to conflicting work commitments. Individual interviews were conducted with the remaining three participants followed by a mini focus group discussion. However, Creswell (2013), and Yin (2014) established parameters for case studies to have at least three participants with Seidman (2006) establishing focus groups with at least six members; less than six being a mini-focus group. Therefore, I did not feel this was adequate to explore my research question and re-posted
my research request on LinkedIn and The Taos Institute websites but also expanded my search to also include two more business sites with lists of practitioners: A Company of Experts and The Center for Appreciative Inquiry websites.

In the second group of respondents, two more participants were recruited, which individual interviews were conducted with and another mini-focus group discussion. In the preliminary analysis of the data from these two recruiting efforts it was determined the data was not robust enough to warrant a conclusion and a third research request was sent to the same four websites. This third request produced three more participants, which were interviewed and another mini-focus group discussion was held. There were now eight AI practitioner participants, but there was still a need for a focus group of six or more participants.

Grouping of the participants was determined by availability. The individual interviews were scheduled and conducted through a web conferencing platform. Three attempts for focus group discussions including all eight individual participants resulted in mini focus groups due to last minute work conflicts for participants. The mini focus group discussions were conducted and recorded through the web conferencing platform, as well. However, while attending an Appreciative Inquiry Facilitator training in California, I was given the opportunity to hold a focus group discussion with 11 volunteers from the course participants and separate from the original eight individual study participants. The focus group participants held various titles, used AI in different ways, and had anywhere from one to 14 years of experience. This opportunity was especially valuable to me because there were participants from all over the world who were using AI in several capacities so the experiences shared and evidence of impact were more robust. Gleaning different perspectives from different industries and geographic areas provided a platform for meaningful conversation. An unintended outcome from this roundtable discussion
was the formation of a quarterly web conferencing platform organized by one of the participants to continue the collaboration and discussion that began in the focus group. The spurring of this newly formed support network lent further support to the study of a need to better define determinants of impact. This was, also, considered evidence of the need to help AI practitioners develop dialogue around their practice, the impacts they may be having, and how to determine what those impacts might be.

**Instrumentation**

I am a unique instrument in this research study. I come from a hard science background with studies in microbiology and nursing and have taught high school Biology, Chemistry, Integrated Physics and Chemistry, Geometry, and Algebra 2 over the past nine years. Before that, I worked in compliance and teaching for the mortgage and real estate industry. This life experience, along with my personality type, affords me a very structured, black and white view of my world. It is my attempt to clarify and summarize participant responses while minimizing bias I may bring to the study (Creswell, 2003). Using the variable matrix from the literature review case studies as the discussion focus there was no need for a survey or other instrument to host the semistructured interviews to discuss the research question with the critical colleagues. Through the three critical colleague discussions I was able to craft the research question to be: How do AI practitioners determine impact?

**Data Collection**

The purpose of a research study informs data collection methods. Determining impact of AI involves considering the underlying elements of process and strategic design that help match an approach to a specific situation (Bushe & Marshak, 2015). The study efforts were focused on collecting empirical data to confirm, modify, or reject these measures as they are applied to AI
methods. Data was collected from three interview sources (individual interviews, mini-focus group interviews, and a focus group interview) and practitioner provided samples of their follow-up surveys used to help determine impact.

The individual interviews were semistructured and conducted over a 40–45 minute time span. The phenomenologically based interview opened with a request for the participant to tell a story of a time when they held an AI and felt they had an impact. At the end of that story the participant was asked to explain how they knew, or determined, they had an impact from that scenario. Participants were also asked for samples of any documents or tools they used to aid their determination of impact. By asking, primarily, open ended questions, the research could build on and explore the responses participants’ provided (Seidman, 2006).

The mini-focus group discussions were structured in the same manner. Using a phenomenologically based, semistructured interview format through the web conferencing platform to hold and record the interviews, each 40–45 minute discussion explored their impactful story examples previously provided in the individual interview sessions. After providing extensions of their examples with more details, they were asked again for determinants of impact and sample tools. Three mini-focus group discussions were held with varying members of the eight individual participants.

The full focus group discussion was structured the same way for consistency with the variation of all participants sitting together in the same room instead of through a video conference call. A recording device was used to capture the discussion, which started with telling stories of AI they felt had an impact. Keeping true to the research model, participants were then asked to explain how they knew they had an impact and asked for documents or tools they may have used to identify impact. The larger focus group had a broader interview style, meaning the
request for a story was posed to the group instead of a single person and they volunteered to share. As the discussion started, the conversation was guided toward the research question to narrow the conversation. This technique was identified as more of a brainstorming session route by Krueger and Casey (2010). To summarize, interview data was collected from three interview sources and a sampling of documents used to determine impact:

1. Eight individual interviews with AI practitioners
2. Three mini-focus group discussions comprised of various members of the eight individuals
3. An 11-member focus group of individuals unrelated to the initial eight practitioners
4. Document samples from participants

**Data Analysis Procedures**

Primary data were collected through individual interviews with follow-up focus groups and a full focus group discussion. Creswell (2014) discussed steps to developing codes and recognize themes in qualitative data (p. 198). Iterative processes with an ad hoc coding method afforded the identification of significant elements for breaking down and synthesizing the data in a meaningful way (Bowen, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The interviews and group discussions were recorded and uploaded to Temi.com for transcribing. I used an iterative process with constant comparison to chunk, code, and classify data. Throughout the ad hoc stages, I looked for emergent patterns in the codes. The transcripts were then uploaded to the website OptimalWorkshop.com for developing a thematic analysis. Preliminary themes were determined and sent to participants for member checking to empower them in the analysis of data, thereby facilitating revision and a synthesis of the data into more

During the analysis I employed replication logic to the case study to reduce the probability of multiple variables and reduce rival explanations for my results (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Data triangulation was used to validate the analysis, comparing the data between the individual interviews, the mini-focus groups, and the full focus group. Coding processes were repeated to identify convergent themes to link the theoretical realm (context) to the observational realm (observation).

**Limitations of the Research Design**

In the field of social sciences, self-report responses have become a measurement cornerstone for holistic data gathering considering perceptions, cultural climate, and an organization. Self-reports solicit subjective feelings and information about the behaviors and situations of people that can only be obtained through sampling of individuals about themselves (Fowler, 2013). However, interviews have limitations and can be hampered by actual participant completion, the honesty of the answers, and individuals wanting to portray a different image than what are the correct scenario details. Nonetheless, the use of a self-reporting method was the best-suited data collecting methods for answering my research question, especially when triangulated with focus groups.

Wargo (2015) defined research limitations as areas, or variables, for which the researcher has no control over. Limitations may include: sample sizes, methodology constraints, length of the study, and response rate. Limitations for this study included:

- Time constraints for completion
- Finding willing participants
• Participants who were not able to articulate their practices for determining intervention impact
• Participants who did not evaluate whether their intervention had an impact or have a tool that could be shared
• Potential researcher bias

Precautions were taken to mitigate the limitations of this study and support credibility. During the design phase, enlisting critical colleagues to discuss the questions I was considering, how they would be structured, and meaning for AI practice was an important component. Post-interview transcripts and coding stages were sent to participants for member checking and comment. During the member checking process, researcher reflection and peer debriefing were enlisted at each chunking and coding stage. Data triangulation between the interview types was also a key to mitigating the study limitations. Establishing boundaries to delimit the study were based on sampling selection and context of the questions through story telling.

Because this is an exploratory, single-case study, generalizing the results should be done with caution. Efforts were made throughout analysis to link theories with themes identified in the interview, focus group, and artifact data. What I would expect is the ability to open collegial dialogues regarding the applicable transferability of existing theoretical frameworks for cognition, paradigm, and behavior as described in Chapter 5 onto the emergent themes of this study as evidence of determinants of impact.

Validation

Content analysis is the linking between the theoretical realm and the observational realm (Suter, 2012). Theories, ideas, and hunches help form the conceptualization task to identify the theoretical pattern. The identified theoretical patterns are then possibly linked to the
observational patterns as derived from “direct observation in the form of impressions, field notes, and the like, as well as more formal objective measures” (Trochim, 2006, para. 3). Correlating theoretical and observation patterns strengthen internal validity in analysis and allow findings to be generalizable or transferrable to other situations (Yin, 2014).

Before results can be generalized or transferred, they must be deemed credible (trustworthy) and dependable (reliable). In this study, as described under limitations, precautions were taken to preserve the credibility and dependability of this study. Post-interview transcripts and coding stages were sent to participants for member checking and comment. Once each interview was transcribed the document was emailed to the corresponding interviewee for agreement of transcription accuracy. Each coding iteration of the transcriptions were sent back to the appropriate interviewees for comment and agreement on meaning and context as the member checking process. During the member checking process, researcher reflection and peer debriefing were enlisted at each chunking and coding stage. Data triangulation between the interview types was also a key to mitigating the study limitations. Establishing boundaries to delimit the study were based on sampling selection and context of the questions through story telling.

Ethical Issues

The primary focus of ethics for case study research is to do no harm to the human participants while conducting interviews (Yin, 2009). My initial awareness training for this consideration was provided prior to beginning the dissertation phase of my doctoral program. The university required a Human Subjects Protection Training in partnership with the Collaborative Institution Training Initiative (CITI), which was completed online.
For another ethical consideration participation in the interviews and focus groups was voluntary with subject’s having the ability to cease their involvement at any time. They signed an informed consent form with information about the study purpose, an overview of potential risks, benefits, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw. Additionally, subjects were offered a copy of the study results for assurances of their anonymity. Determination of conflicts of interest on the part of the researcher had to be considered regarding my potential subjective interpretations and the research design. Creswell (2013) addressed this potential stating, “assumptions are deeply rooted in our training and reinforced by the scholarly community in which we work” (p.19). I had to redress this several times in the course of the study.

Confidentiality of participants was maintained by not using their actual names or requiring them to use their video images during the interviews and focus group discussions. All interviews and discussions were recorded for transcribing and then deleted. Personally identifiable information was redacted from the transcripts, which will be kept for three years from the end of this study in a secure space before being destroyed. No identifiable information was used in the writing of the manuscript; however, pseudonyms have been assigned to differentiate participants.

**Chapter Summary**

Chapter 3 provided the methodology to answer how an AI practitioner determines the impact of an AI. Methodology includes research design, methods, data collection, and analysis. This chapter was first organized with the research question that directs this study followed by the research population and sampling method. Next, I addressed instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures. Finally, I discuss limitations of the research design, validation, expected findings, and ethical issues before concluding with my summary of my methodology.
The study methodology design was a qualitative, bound, single-case study of individual interviews and focus group discussions. This study was an exploration of how AI practitioners determine impact to contribute towards the tuning of an enunciated theoretical basis and narrow the gulf between academics who study change from narrative and interpretive premises and OD practitioners who use dialogical methods. Bridging effective techniques and coherent theoretical frameworks are important to furthering industry scholarship. Determining how AI practitioners identify organizational impact is the next direction in the OD field of study and the focus of my dissertation. Chapter 4 will detail the study results and analysis and conclusion will be featured in Chapter 5.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

This qualitative study was an exploratory, single-case study, from the perspectives of eight AI practitioners and a separate 11-member focus group, that analyzed how the practitioners determine an impact of a given consultation. Through AI worldwide, the common call to action has been for empirical, critical analysis of the theory and practices of AI (Bushe, 1998; Bushe & Marshak, 2011, 2014, 2015; Clarke, n.d.; Conklin, 2009; Grant & Humphries, 2006; Hart, Conklin, & Allen, 2008; Kessler, 2013; Tartell & Vogel, 2017; Willoughby & Tosey, 2007). This study focused on AI as a practice with data convergence from the observational realm linked to theoretical realms in Chapter 5. The data came from purposively selected volunteers who were solicited through multiple websites: LinkedIn, The Taos Institute, A Company of Experts, and The Center for Appreciative Inquiry. Participants volunteered for the study and were selected based on having at least one year of experience using this method of organization development and having used it as their primary methodology. This study relied primarily on interview data from eight individual AI practitioner interviews, three mini focus group discussions comprised from the eight individuals, and a separate 11-member focus group discussion, as well as samples of tools used to determine impact.

This chapter begins with the participant sample description, then delves into the research methodology. Next is the presentation of the data analysis and subsequent results as related to my research question. Sections of this discussion employ the themes identified in my analysis to better delineate the types of impact that practitioners attempt to verify during or after their consultation. This chapter concludes with a summary of findings.
Description of the Sample

The sample for this study was purposeful and homogeneous. The practitioners selected for this study each used AI as their primary method of OD and had at least three years of AI field experience. This sampling method type involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This technique is used in qualitative research when identifying and selecting information-rich cases and most effective when use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). Email invitations were sent to 150 practitioners through the previously identified professional networking websites with 10 initial respondents and eight final participants; two of the study potential members dropped out due to scheduling conflicts. The eight individuals were interviewed separately, then grouped for discussion of the interviews. Scheduling conflicts required three attempts to form a focus group of at least six participants; each failed to reach the required caucus and resulted in mini-focus group discussions. Due to the random responses to email invitations, no consideration was given to the attributes of gender, geography, or in which type of practice AI was being utilized.

Individual Interview Participants

The individual participants in this study were primarily selected by their level of experience and use of AI. Practitioners selected for individual interviews had at least three years of experience using AI as their predominant method of OD. Below is the response rate, attrition number, and subsequent participation in a mini-focus group for solicited participants:
Table 1

*Individual Study Participant Solicitation, Response, Retention*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solicitation Round</th>
<th>Solicitation Month</th>
<th>Email Invitations</th>
<th>Qualified Participants</th>
<th>Drop Outs</th>
<th>Participant Retention</th>
<th>Mini Focus Group Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>May, 2018</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>June, 2018</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>July, 2018</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mini-focus groups comprised of individual participants were formed by the solicitation group from which they were recruited. Each time a mini-focus group was scheduled all participants were invited but only the ones I was in current communication with responded creating three, separate mini-focus group sessions.

Individual participants reported their demographic information, which is summarized in the table below and included years of experience, industry position, geographic location, how often they used AI within a year, as well as age, gender, and ethnicity.

Table 2

*Individual Study Participant Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Years of Practice</th>
<th>Industry Position</th>
<th>Geographic Location &amp; Practice Frequency</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>HR Director for non-profit housing organization. Private consultant for couple’s retreats focusing on collaborative conversations and practical dialogue features of AI</td>
<td>Located in Everett, WA; all consulting has been in Everett, WA. Used regularly, almost every day.</td>
<td>51–60</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>Location and Practice in Conroe and The Woodlands, TX. Approximately 1,040 times per year.</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Private consultant for public and private school districts.</td>
<td>Located in Morrisville, NC; most consulting has been limited to NC or along the east coast. Used daily in individual coaching, several time per year with organizations. Location and practice is in California.</td>
<td>51–60</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Private consultant for individuals (Job Coach).</td>
<td>Located in Morrisville, NC; most consulting has been limited to NC or along the east coast. Used daily in individual coaching, several time per year with organizations. Location and practice is in California. Initial screening was for practitioners with over one year of experience. No additional report given.</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focus Group Participants

The participants of the focus group had a different inclusion criterion since they were all in attendance at the AI Facilitator training. This group is still a purposeful sample due to the nature of the training and experience in the field. All members were currently using AI as a component of their full-time profession, and each had at least one full year experience using AI as their primary method of change leadership. Table 3 summarizes the demographic composition of the focus group participants.

Table 3

Focus Group Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Years of Practice</th>
<th>Industry Position</th>
<th>Geographic Location</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 Participants</td>
<td>1-17</td>
<td>FEMA, Higher education &amp; private consultant, Non-profit and private consultant, corporate CEO, mental health, public school, and private consultants.</td>
<td>Various locations in the USA, Canada, and Australia</td>
<td>30-39 3</td>
<td>40-49 3</td>
<td>50-59 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant Profiles

All the participants of this study reported having from 1-20 years of experience using Appreciative Inquiry, or major components of the process, as the main part of their practice. Individuals of the study had at least three years of experience, the focus group had a single
member with only one year of experience. Each AI consultation did not necessarily use all AI process steps. AI design depends on the client’s needs, the goal of the AI, and the time allotted for the inquiry.

**Research Methodology and Analysis**

This study was an exploration of how AI practitioners determine impact. Exploration through single-case study allowed me to identify patterns, induce meanings, construct conclusions, and build theory (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). This section briefly describes the study methodology used as informed by the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 1, and further supported by the theoretical foundations from the literature review in Chapter 2, as well as data collection and analysis methodology in Chapter 3.

**Overview Grounding**

After completing the literature review, a conceptual framework was formed to explore how practitioners identify the organizational impact of an AI consultation, which helped to design this qualitative, bounded, exploratory, single case study analysis of AI practices. The primary analysis focused on the evidence from outcome measures that practitioners used as they deployed AI methods. Preliminary research also helped identify the theoretical framework as a blueprint for understanding the technical, hermeneutic, and emancipatory knowledge of AI practitioners from their own perspectives, thereby making this study more meaningful or purposeful (Creswell, 2014).

Because AI is a process and is frequently described as ongoing and a way of being, it is easy to get lost in the process itself, and thereby lose sight of the evidence of impact. The conceptual framework (Figure 1) depicts the simplicity of the research focus, yet maintains the critical attention to that specific aspect. This focal point is the area of needed expansion in the
literature and for purposeful collegial discussions (Bushe & Marshak, 2015; McNamara, 2012; Tartell & Vogel, 2017). For clearer understanding of AI processes and how to consider the data collected, the theoretical framework was constructed from works by Bushe (2007, 2011, 2012), Cooperrider (2017), and Watkins, Mohr, & Kelly (2011). AI evolved under the theories of Social Constructionism and the power of an image (Bushe & Marshak, 2014b). It is within these boundaries that meaning was derived from the data to collate, organize, and present the analysis. Founded in the conceptual and theoretical framework, the methodology used in this study was summarized.

**Single Case Study Strategies**

The “single-case study research designs are a diverse and powerful set of procedures useful for demonstrating causal relations among clinical phenomena” (Nock, Michel, & Photos, 2007, p. 337). This study included data collected from transcribed individual interviews, focus group discussions, and samples of key tools (documents) used by AI practitioners as they went about determining AI impact. Data was collected through a series of individual interviews followed by mini-focus group discussions, a full focus group discussion and the collection of document sample tools. The interviews and group discussions were recorded and uploaded to Temi.com for transcribing. An iterative process was used for constant comparison to chunk, code, and classify data. Throughout the ad hoc stages, data was analyzed for emergent patterns in the codes. The transcripts were then uploaded to the website OptimalWorkshop.com for developing a thematic analysis. Preliminary themes were determined and sent to participants via email for member checking with each iteration of chunking and coding to empower them in the analysis of data, thereby facilitating revision and a synthesis of the data into more meaningful, trustworthy themes.
Individual Interviews

A total of eight individuals were interviewed for this study. Recruiting emails were sent to potential participants through the previously identified professional networking websites. The email described the study, participant attributes (see Appendix B), the need to record and transcribe the interviews, and the approximate time commitment (see Appendix A). Volunteer participants who met the study criteria attributes were emailed the Consent Form (see Appendix D) to sign and return along with the Semistructured Questionnaire (see Appendix C).

Semistructured interviews lasting 40–45 minutes were conducted and recorded through a web conferencing platform to guide the conversation using AI techniques to draw out the needed information. The Discovery, Part 1 stage of AI, solicits stories of a time when people were directly involved in a scenario where their company was at its best. Using this baseline strategy, the first question was formulated for the study participant to tell me about a time when they felt they had a most impactful AI consultation (see Appendix C). This question drew rich stories for delving deeper into their experiences to help identify more precisely how they had an impact, which also included the follow up question. With their mind already on a specific incident, it was easier for them to identify why they chose a given experience to share and how they knew there had been an impact. This discussion led to a third question asking if they had a tool or document that was used to help them determine the impact from that experience. Only one participant provided documents.

Mini-Focus Group Discussions

The mini-focus group discussions were not a planned part of my study. Due to repeated scheduling conflict with my participants, I struggled to have enough members as my focus group discussion. I anticipated this as a potential risk when designing my study since participants were
not centrally located, on the same time zone, or with the same organization. Between May, 2018, and September, 2018, when the 11-member focus group met, I had three mini-focus group discussions with various members of my eight participant group. Each of these mini-focus groups had two or three participants. The ensuing discussions were valuable and included in the study results because they offered different insights than the individual interviews.

The mini-focus group discussions were also 45 minutes and semistructured. These discussions were more focused and involved questions more specific to their experiences in order to gain a deeper understanding of how they determined impact. A dynamic of a focus group is the brainstorming session that does not require an agreement or consensus (Krueger & Casey, 2010). At times I was merely a spectator as the practitioners questioned each other and offered suggestions or anecdotal commentary to the other’s story. Other times, I was active in guiding the discussion to keep it on track and facilitate the discovery of meaning needed to help answer the research question.

**Focus Group Discussion**

I had been concerned about my ability to coordinate a full focus group with eight participants until I decided to attend an AI Facilitator Training in California. There were 28 people in attendance during a workshop, and I asked if it were possible to announce an invitation to a focus group. The next day, 11 of the 28 attendees agreed to be a part of my focus group. I think that sharing the experience of this workshop had already pulled the group into a mindset of storytelling, generativity, and collaboration. They had heard in our introduction that I was working on my dissertation and exploring how practitioners know whether they have had an impact from the AI. In side conversations, many had asked me questions and became personally vested in my endeavor prior to the discussion group. The personal connection to me and my
research effort made the discussion more fluid and enriching. I witnessed a similar phenomenon in this focus group as I had experienced with the mini-focus groups where the participants were fueled by each other, exchanging ideas, and asking clarifying questions of each other.

Document Tools for Determining Impact

Only one of my 19 participants had any type of tool or documents that they used to determine an impact and provided three samples. They were very specific in how they conducted their AI practice and the meaning they wanted from how the AI was targeted. Usually, the members reported that impact tools are organizationally determined and designed, hence not the property of the practitioners. They also reported they would not keep a document tool because each AI is unique, and it would not likely be used again unless returning to that organization. In order for a tool to be meaningful, it must be original and specific to the situation and developed with the goals and objectives of that organization’s purpose for hiring a consultant. The tools that were provided are surveys delivered back to the organizations to solicit feedback and potential referrals.

Analysis

The first reading of my interview transcripts involved the search for any words or phrases that indicated evidence of impact. The focus was for any indication the participant may have disclosed as a source of impact of their AI consultation. My initial read attempted to identify any trends in the data or identify potential codes in participant responses (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I made annotations about what was disclosed as evidence of impact and began a color-coded index card system to try to organize the information I was collecting. This process raised many more questions, so I began to draft follow up questions to discuss with my participants and with the critical colleagues who reviewed my research questions with me before my study began. I then
developed the following graphic (Figure 4) to help me focus my clarifying questions, direct my conversations, and use as a foundation for determining codes with each round of the analytic process.

![Relational graphic](image)

*Figure 4. Relational graphic.*

As an iterative process, reading, chunking, and coding were repeated and questions devised for discussion of meanings from the data. Relationships were studied for changes from what was thought to be known to what was actually being learned. This process repeated for each of the individual interviews, the mini-focus groups, and the focus group, respectively.

The next step was to attempt to identify themes. The web conferencing platform video-recorded interviews were uploaded into Temi.com for transcription, then loaded into OptimalWorkshop.com for theme analysis. Since the Optimal Workshop uploaded transcripts were now raw, still without annotations, I read them again and tagged them with codes to see how my new mindset compared with my initial coding. Each interview transcript uploaded as a separate file, or observation with a total of 17 files uploaded. In those cumulative files I tagged
143 items (words or phrases) for chunking, coding, and theme building. Some of the words or phrases were similar, so tags, or terms were categorized. Optimal Workshop offers a theme builder feature that helps to identify patterns in your work graphically, but does not do the analytic work. Using the Bubble Chart feature, I was able to visualize the preliminary themes that emerged from my chunking exercise (see Figure 5):

- Culture Change
- Energy/Energy Shift
- Conversation/Way people interact or engage each other
- Feeling/way people feel about each other / organization
- Process change or development
- Product: strategic plan created
- Surveys/Interviews
- Self-Awareness/Behavior changes
- Member Checking Themes
The preliminary themes for how AI practitioners determine an impact were sent to all study participants. As a part of the member checking process, the hope was to solicit their thoughts and commentary about how these preliminary themes aligned with their current field practices and how they determined impact. I only received participant comments from three study members, though they did not comment on all themes. Their feedback was helpful to extended my understanding of how my research themes were evolving. I began to see patterns in their comments and themes that paired to the comment. A sample of these comments may be viewed in the table (Table 4) below, followed by a verbiage pairing example from my interpretation of this data table:

Figure 5. Bubble chart of preliminary themes.

Paradigm Shift
Organization Behavior Change
Epistemic Logic
Doxastic Logic
Individual Behavior Change
Organizational Learning
Individual Learning
Table 4

*Sample Theme Member Checking Comments and Relational Connections Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preliminary Theme Number</th>
<th>Preliminary Theme</th>
<th>Member Checking Comment</th>
<th>Theme-Comment Verbiage Pairing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Culture Change</td>
<td>“Very definite impact indicator but, generally, longitudinal and not necessarily seen at the time the AI is done”.</td>
<td>Culture change - longitudinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Energy/Energy Shift</td>
<td>“Palpable shift in energy during the AI is a definite indication of impact” “This impact can be seen during the AI, immediately following the AI, and can influence culture change, longitudinally.”</td>
<td>Energy – palpable shift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conversation/Way people interact or engage each other</td>
<td>“Yes, moving from a deficit language to strengths-based language is a clear impact of AI.” “Changing culture starts with changing how people feel about each other and the company they work for. The change in energy that happens during AI is the first step in making this happen. A change in their feelings, like may be reported on surveys is a good indicator of impact”.</td>
<td>Interactions – strengths-based language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Feeling/way people feel about each other / organization</td>
<td>“Process changes are done through strategic planning and AI is a major method of planning. Being able to accomplish a process change or develop a new strategic plan using AI would, definitely, be an impact of using it; especially if you can see the plans goal attainment, or completion,” “The creation of a plan or other product meant to be created through the use of AI is only part of the impact. To get a true measure of whether there was an impact is to see if the goals determined during that planning have been met”.</td>
<td>Process Development – strategic planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Process change or development</td>
<td></td>
<td>Process Development – goal attainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Product: strategic plan created</td>
<td></td>
<td>Process Product – strategic planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Surveys/Interviews</td>
<td>No comments were provided regarding the use of surveys or interviews to determine impact.</td>
<td>No responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Self-Awareness/Behavior changes</td>
<td>“This directly relates to the energy shift that happens during an AI that leads to how people see each other and interact, and eventually to cultural changes. You can see this transformation begin during the AI.”</td>
<td>Behavior Changes – culture/transformation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the interviews the term *verisimilitude* had been used by three of the participants, independently, to describe what is meant to be close to the truth as a way of describing the qualitative analyses of an impactful AI. Though this term came up in multiple conversations and its application to describing phenomenon observed in my study could be ascertained, I did not feel the word, itself, made meaning of my data. For the purposes of this study, a deeper understanding of what an impact could be and better ways of describing them and relating them to current theoretical models was needed. I had attended the AI Facilitator Training to become embedded in the process since the training course was held as an AI. I, also, felt it would give me an opportunity to speak to more people practicing and teaching the process. During the member checking dialogues I was reminded of the theoretical foundations of AI, which include paradigm changes (mindsets), theories of human behavior change (individual learning), theories of organizational behavior change (organizational learning), and verisimilitude (truth making). These were the frameworks that made sense for how to classify the determinants of impact reported by participants, which support the practice processes of AI. Hence, the final AI impact key themes that emerged from this study became:

- **Cognitive Changes: Doxastic Logic (belief) or Epistemic Logic (knowledge)**
- **Mindset Change: Paradigm Shift**
- **Behavior Changes: individual or organizational**

**Cognitive Change: Doxastic Logic and Epistemic Logic**

Considering the place of verisimilitude in the study and reviewing the theoretical framework of AI, questions arose for participants about the difference between what people believed to be the truth and what they knew to be the truth and how these truths affected their cognitive perspectives to create or prevent change. These conversations led to doxastic and
epistemic logic. Doxastic Logic is founded in what people believe to be true; that is, a reasoning that justifies beliefs, and can best be exemplified in this way: *perception as reality*. On the other hand, Epistemic Logic is concerned with what is known, or a reasoning about how knowledge is determined. These will be discussed in more detail in the presentation of the Key Themes later in this chapter.

**Mindset Change: Paradigm Shift**

A paradigm has been defined as “…the generally accepted perspective of a particular discipline, theory or mindset at a given time” (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2003). The documentation from the AI Facilitator training, stated: “Cooperrider, et al, [report] there are two approaches to human systems change or learning: deficit-based, the classical paradigm approach; and strengths-based, a new paradigm approach” (Stetson & Miller, 2004). By shifting the paradigm of focus to what is working (strengths, successes, optimistic possibilities), with the intentional purpose of creating positive images, positive energy is then created and a hopeful future of organizational health, vitality and excellence emerges. People who are able to become more creative and innovative affords organizations a way to “find their point of highest vitality at the intersection of Continuity, Novelty, and Transition” (The Center for Appreciative Inquiry, n.d., p. 4, Day 2).

**Behavioral Change: Individual and Organizational**

For individual behavior change theories, AI considers three realities: historical, current, and anticipatory. Freud and others constructed theories about individual behavior and how it is determined by our *historical reality*. Lewin and Skinner offered theories of individual behavior as being influenced by our *current reality*. Cooperrider and Srivastva revisited Heidegger’s
theory of *anticipatory reality*, which is determined by who we imagine we can be (Watkins & Mohr, 2003, p. 50, italics in original text, as cited by The Center for Appreciative Inquiry, n.d.).

Regarding organizational behavior change, The Center for Appreciative Inquiry cited the work of Srivastva and Fry (1992), who addressed the nature of organizational behavior and change through a theory proposing how organizations find their “point of highest vitality at the intersection of *continuity* (order), *novelty* (chaos), and *transition* (p. 5, Day 2). These can be paired with AI processes by relating continuity to the Discovery phase, novelty to the Dream phase, and transition to the Design and Destiny/Delivery phase. This pairing provides the theoretical framework for AI as it relates to organizational behavior changes.

**Analysis of Key Theme Data to the Five Principles of AI by Cooperrider and Whitney**

To determine whether the study data fit the parameters of AI it was necessary to take the emergent Key Themes and evaluate them against the principles of AI. Cooperrider and Whitney (2001) articulated the Five Principles of AI. The principles with their descriptions are described below:

*The Constructionist Principle*: relates what is known to actions. “The purpose of inquiry, which is viewed as totally inseparable and intertwined with action, is the creation of ‘generative theory,’ not so much mappings or explanations of yesterday’s world but anticipatory articulations of tomorrow’s possibilities” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001, p. 20). Bushe and Kassam (2005) extended the principle stating organizations are socially constructed realities making it imperative to include as many as possible in the inquiry to design collective futures.

*The Simultaneity Principle*: intertwines inquiry and intervention. “The seeds of change-the things people think and talk about, the things people discover and learn, and the things that inform dialogue and inspire images of the future-are implicit in the very first questions we ask”
Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001, p. 20). Bushe and Kassam (2005) related that questions are fateful and the very act of beginning an AI invokes change; with the very first question.

*The Poetic Principle*: relates an organization to a book over a living system as previously described in traditional OD models. Bushe and Kassam (2005) equated organizational life as constantly being coauthored and expressed through the stories people relate to each other daily.

*The Anticipatory Principle*: touts today’s actions are guided by images of the future. “To inquire in ways that serves to refashion anticipatory reality—especially the artful creation of positive imagery on a collective basis—may be the most prolific thing any inquiry can do” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001, p. 21).

*The Positive Principle*: requires positive affect and social bonding to ensure momentum and sustainable change. Bushe and Kassam (2005) cited positive emotion research by Fredrickson (2000, 2001) and Ludema et al. (1997) for the need of hope, excitement, inspiration, camaraderie, and joy as critical components of change processes. “The major thing we do that makes the difference is to craft and seed, in better and more catalytic ways, the unconditional positive question” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001, p. 22).

**Analysis of Key Theme Data to the 5-D AI Process Model**

Interview questions were divided into two distinct parts. The first set of questions were designed to help each participant focus on a specific time when they were involved with an AI consultation, and felt they had an impact. Story telling a direct adhesion to the AI Process Model as the Discovery, stage two. Stage one, Define, was surpassed with the research description in the recruiting email. After telling their impactful AI story they answered the research question regarding how they knew they had an impact. During both the mini-focus groups and full focus group, the second part of the questions opened a discussion on what impact is and how the
practitioners define the term as it relates to AI. The mini-focus group discussion questions were embedded in the third and fourth stages of the AI process, Dream and Design, respectively.

Dream stage is to imaging what could be and Design determines what should be. For this study, the discussion was a cross section of practitioners collaborating how to determine impact from differentiated practice perspectives. The final question asked whether they agreed with the study definition of impact, and now that they have been involved with this study, would they change what they do or how they define impact. The final question flowed between the Dream and Design stages of the process into the fifth, Destiny stage, creating what will be as discussion centered on defining impact across industries and how determination of impact could be done.

**Analysis of Data to the AI Interconnected Concepts of Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly**

One of the greatest challenges in this study has been to quantify a straightforward process or tool to identify the *how* for determining an impact. Attempts for a simple, static definition is challenged by both the rapidly evolving nature of AI theory and practice, as well as the subtle and dramatic implications of the paradigm shift in its application to human and organization change (Watkins, Mohr, & Kelly, 2011). Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly posited AI as three interconnected concepts (p. 33):

- **AI as a philosophy of knowledge** – a way of coming to understand the world.

- **AI as a principle-based intervention theory** that emphasizes the role of language, dialogue, and story with a particular focus on the power of inquiry in the social construction of reality.

- **AI, embedded in its own philosophy and intervention theory**, may be applied to any process and methodology for work in organizations.
The emergent study themes appear congruent with these interconnected concepts. The relationship with their first concept, philosophy of knowledge, relating to cognitive component or logics theme. Their second concept, paraphrased as dialogic aspects of a social construction of reality demonstrating the paradigm shifts theme. The third concept, AI philosophy and intervention theory, representing organizational behavioral changes. This relationship between the study themes and these interconnected concepts became the foundation for finalizing key themes as determinants of impact. When the interview transcripts were re-evaluated with these themes in mind, only the portion of the transcript that directly answered the research question was considered and the tags (codes) were categorized in Optimal Workshop based on one of these final themes. What emerged were consolidated themes that would become the final results of the exploratory case study. Table 5 indicates those final results:

Table 5

*Evidence of AI Impact: Occurrences of each Theme*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Theme</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doxastic Logic</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemic Logic</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindset Change (Paradigm Shift)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Behavior Change</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Behavior Change</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: these occurrences did not overlap.*
Analysis of Data to Literature Review Case Study Variable Matrix by Bushe and Kassam

As a cross-check to the literature review case studies and how transformational impact was determined, this study was evaluated with the same variables identified by Bushe and Kassam (2005). The variables adopted and applied to this research case study are indicated in Table 6. Based on the matrix analysis, the data gleaned in this study are indicated to be Transformational.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables of Transformative Appreciative Inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determinants of impact for AI identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Knowledge or New Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generative Metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure or Ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvisation or Implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bushe and Kassam (2005) reviewed variables 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 for clarity of the decision rules used to complete the matrix. The summation of the decision rule review is presented next (p. 170-171).

*Transformational or Not:* Transformational when there is evidence of a qualitative shift in the state of being or identity of the system, usually reflected in patterns of organization emerging after the AI that were clearly different from previous patterns. Not transformational when changes were applied without changing the basic nature of the system.

*New Knowledge or New Processes:* The AI lead to collective creation of new information to serve as a new referential base. New Knowledge was coded by creating a new lens for looking at the world; New Process was coded when the ideas focused on reaching a particular end or goal.

*Generative Metaphor or No Generative Metaphor:* Coded for Generative Metaphor if the case had some kind of artifact or common reference point to guide or serve as memory of a key
event. The Generative Metaphor symbols could be material, linguistic, or other so long as the group agreed upon meaning, had to be persistent, evoked a unique shared meaning, and contain within it new lenses and/or possibilities for action.

*Figure or Ground:* Coded as Figure if the process surfaced some element for increased inspection. Coded as Ground if the process caused change or create new background assumptions, which all future actions would be based.

*Implementation or Improvisation:* Implementation was coded if a goal was pursued as a pre-determined, specific, tangible change. Improvisation was coded when there were numerous, diverse ideas for changes by various actors.

**Interview Data Trend**

Another observation made during the interviews was a pattern in the way participants related impact to their practice. Participants that worked in higher education tended to be more theory and data driven for evidence of impact. Strategic plans and goal attainment became strong indicators of impact. Elected, repeated use of the AI process in strategic planning was another indicator, and a more longitudinal perspective to AI became important in their descriptions. Participants that used AI for individual coaching, whether in organizations or private practice, tended to be less theory driven and relied more heavily on individual changes in ways of speaking and interacting with others, or self-reported feelings about the AI process. The coaching AI practitioners tended to use surveys, interviews, and quick check-ins with their clients, as well as their practitioner observations of behavior or perspective changes, happened without documenting or tracking the occurrences and prevented the collection of this type of impact data from study participants. For those practitioners who use AI for combined environments, for example, a corporation that has a consultant in for a day or a week, may or
may not track or look for any impact. Since the encounter is brief and the purpose of the AI is narrowly specific, there is little reported need or benefit for tracking or determining an impact.

**Key Theme: Cognitive Change**

The evidence of impact that could be related to Doxastic Logic came from the practitioner use of surveys, interviews, and observations of how people interacted with one another. Each of these assessment methods has value in determining a cognitive change in the way individuals believe, or perceive, a situation or their relationship to that situation. Fink (2003) recommended the use of qualitative survey analysis when exploring perceptions of meanings and experiences (p. 61). The second determinant of doxastic logic as a means to identify cognitive change was interviews and is considered to be very effective and efficient. Using self-report is the easiest and fastest way to collect data (Kahtri, 2015). Self-report can be survey or interview but can have drawbacks because the answers provided may be given based on what the respondent *thinks* the answer should be instead of reporting their *true* belief. Therefore, behavior observations are the most reliable determinants of the three Doxastic Logic methods of collecting data since it is objective. “Most methods of behavioral observation provide quantitative and objective data that can be used to determine current levels of behavior, to set goals for behavioral improvement, and to measure change following intervention plans” (Psychology, n.d., para.1).

Three of the participants used surveys: a job coach for persons with disabilities (R. I.), a couple’s therapist (J. P. B.), and a corporate job coach working mostly with executive level management as individuals and teams (A. K.). The job coach (R. I.) used the survey technique to query job skills achievement and feelings of comfort completing tasks and to determine satisfaction with job and support level. The therapist providing services during couple’s retreats (J. P. B.) utilized surveys to assess couple’s self-reported feelings about their experience during
the retreat before a group discussion of the experience. The participant (A. K.) who used written surveys enlisted the document as a follow up tool at prescribed times post consultation. The general purpose of A. K.’s Post Consultation Evaluation survey is to determine changes in the way respondents think, how they may act differently, team perceptions, and any positive performance progress. This part of the survey is open ended then uses a Likert scale to have respondents report commitment and engagement about the coaching as an individual and another scale for the team.

**A.K. Post-Coaching Evaluation Tool**

Only one of the participants, A.K., used any type of document to determine impact; the survey questions are included, below, and used with permission. A.K. uses a Post-Coaching survey which is directed at the Individual Coaches and surveys the following questions with the type of impact, or change, has been added to sections by researcher. The full text of the questions has been included to support the change label.

Individual Coach’s open response questions that describe Doxastic Logic.

- What changes do you see in your thinking?
- How has this impacted your actions?
- What have you perceived in your team since the Retreat/Coaching?
- Then, describe what progress in each area has looked like.

Next three question use the Likert Scale (1-5) to rate Doxastic Logic

- To what extent has this process positively improved your performance?
- How committed/engaged did you feel about the retreat and coaching we just completed?
- How committed or engaged do you think the team felt about the retreat and coaching
we completed?

The next part of the survey is directed towards the Leadership Team to evaluate Doxastic Logic, Epistemic Logic, and Individual Behaviors:

- What are the most important outcomes/metrics that you think the coachee has improved as a result of this coaching engagement?
- Then, describe what progress in each area has looked like.
- What are the most important capabilities/behaviors that you think the coachee has improved as a result of this Retreat / Coaching?
- Has the change you co-created moved at the pace you expected?
- What stories would you share that demonstrate your team performance since the retreat?
- What value has been added to your team’s performance since the engagement began?

The third, and final, part of the Post Coaching Evaluation survey evaluate Doxastic Logic about the coaching experience:

- What does your coach do especially well that you would suggest that he/she continue to do more of?
- What would you suggest that your coach change or improve upon?
- Looking back on your experience with this process, what suggestions do you have for ways it could be improved?
- Was engagement this worth the time you invested?
- What did you find especially positive about your coaching experience?
- What could have been done differently to make it a better or more valuable experience?
• To what extent was the coaching worth the organization’s financial investment?
• How important was the coach’s coaching progress to his or her organization or workgroup?
• Would you recommend your coach to a colleague? Please explain.

Participants reported that because this method of evaluation is from a personal perspective there were no other data collecting forms documenting this type of impact offered by them. Most of the practitioners who attempted to identify this type of impact would simply conduct an oral pre-assessment of beliefs before beginning the AI, and another oral assessment at the end where people were asked to share their own stories with the group.

Initially, it was difficult to understand why an AI practitioner would not have a written survey for this pre- and post-assessment to quantify the change is perspective, which afforded me an opportunity for clarification. Comments regarding this dilemma were unanimously centered around the experience of an AI as personal, where each person makes their own meaning. By providing a pre-assessment the researcher may be predisposing them to a way of thinking about the experience before it begins. “Just by asking a question you make an impact by the very nature of suggesting a thought process they may not have had before” (Cockell & McAurther-Blair, AI Facilitator Training Lecture, 2018).

Another aspect of Doxastic Logic disclosed by practitioners was that it is a component of individual beliefs, which then becomes a factor in how they view and interact with each other (behavioral changes), and then categorically change the behavior of the organization. During practice they are observing and assessing Doxastic Logic, but that is not the goal of the AI, so it was not the focus of their data collection. The exception is when AI is used in a therapeutic setting where the individual’s beliefs, perceptions, or reality, become the focus of the AI.
Epistemic Logic changes how we know what we know and the reasoning we use to know it. The evidence of impact that could be related to Epistemic Logic came from the practitioner use of group discussion centered around organizational data or recounting who first had knowledge of events. One example from the research stated, “Through active listening and observing each other and their partner, they were able to make an interpretation about what they heard and saw.” This reasoning about knowledge method is another catalyst for changing perceptions and behaviors individually and, subsequently, organizationally. In this epistemic example, the practitioner was able to describe how their thinking and relating to others changed as a result of the AI. To transfer this finding to an educational setting would be similar to a teaching team looking at student performance data, knowing what the scores are, then drilling down into the data to understand why the scores turned out the way they did.

**Key Theme: Mindset Change via Paradigm Shift**

The cornerstone of a paradigm shift is the movement from a deficit-based methodology for organizational change to a new paradigm model of using AI as “as a way of seeing and being in the world” (Watkins, Mohr, & Kelly, 2011, p. 17). Instead of an organization being a problem to be solved, it becomes a mystery to be appreciated: appreciating the best of what is, envisioning what might be, talking about what should be, and innovating what will be. In my interviews, this was the most emphasized way to indicate an impact, yet seemed to be the most difficult example to share. Most of the participants indicated immediate impacts during the AI through the cognitive changes that would lead to a paradigm shift. Depending on the length of their AI they may or may not have been a witness to the shift.

One of the examples of Paradigm Shift came from J.P.B. who used AI to facilitate couple’s therapy during a retreat setting. After the retreat process, couple would join the therapist
in a group reflection and discussion. During the post-retreat discussion, the couples demonstrated movement from a cognitive change into a paradigm shift. As described by the therapist, the couples “relating [to each other in the group discussion] was the integration of their seeing and hearing about what they might do differently”. The integration being described by this practitioner is the pivotal point where the person moves from a cognitive change into a paradigm shift. Another notable example of a paradigm shift was described by a practitioner: “So, it’s almost like a physical shift in people’s thinking as they stop for a moment and they know where I am going. They say, ‘All right,’, as much as they are dying to talk about what didn’t go well, you know, my boss continues to work with me on trying to get to do this.”. I chose these two examples because they highlight two concepts: there is a point where the paradigm shift occurs and, as described by one study participant, there is almost a physical shift in the way they think.

**Key Theme: Behavior Changes: Individual or Organizational**

The evidence of impact that could be related to individual behavior changes is tied directly to the new learning people get from what they believe (Doxastic), how they think (Epistemic), and the mindset (Paradigm) they hold. The practitioners in this study whose focus was on organizational change did not look at impact determinants at the individual level; they did not look at the cognitive and paradigm changes of individuals. Individual changes were more accurately described by study participants as an expectation of the process needed to make the organizational changes. One practitioner stated, “One of the incredibly powerful things about AI is that it draws from the inside out. It draws from what people want to acknowledge and what they do well and, unfortunately, it’s not done nearly enough”. In this dialogue the practitioner continues with how impactful it is for people to have permission to acknowledge and share what is working.
In the AI Facilitator Training in California, the facilitator shared an analogy about the power of focusing on what is working. In her analogy, she told the story of Johnny, a preschooler learning to place alphabet blocks in a row. To start the lesson he is given five blocks (A, B, C, D, & E) and shown how to put them in order. Practice is done daily for a time before Johnny is asked to place them in order on his own. He gets three of the five blocks correct. At this point, is your reaction punitive for not getting them all correct, or is there a celebration for the ones he got correct? As simplistic as this analogy is, it is a powerful story of supporting strengths-based paradigms over deficit-based paradigms.

All of the changes that scaffold from what a person believes, to how they think, to how they act, culminate into the organizational behavior as the individuals become a more unified, collective entity. The interactions of these persons become the culture and function of the organization. Practitioner T. F. stated, “This idea of building on patterns, building on what’s working, I think that, for me, continues to be one of the really powerful things about it [AI]. We find ourselves using common language with a strength-based approach.”.

Being able to use a “common language” was a point made by several of the practitioners. As a practitioner, helping the organization find their common language and sharing it with them during the process is described as key to making the AI impactful. In a mini-focus group, the concept of a common language within an organization came up as an indicator of impact. Participant J. P. B. stated, “One of the things that always struck me very quickly as something that works very well when doing an AI is finding the ‘common language,’ so that was the first thing I ever did when I sat down with a management team or anybody else. I didn’t try to put a language on them, I learned their language”. The idea of a common language as a means of determining impact was related to having a slogan or other branding mechanism, or having a
mantra or industry lingo that people would identify with and become a part of their organizational culture. West (n.d.) of the National Business Research Institute aptly stated, “Effective communication is so critical to the efficient functioning of an organization and satisfaction of employees that it has been called the building block of an organization”. West defined common language as the most effective communication strategy for an organization. This facilitates my understanding for the practitioner’s disclosure of its importance. This concept of language was also supported by Bushe and Kassam (2005) in their meta-case analysis when discussing Cooperrider and Whitney’s (2001) Poetic Principle. In that discussion the authors stated words and topics chosen to talk about have stronger implications than just the words. “They invoke sentiments, understandings, worlds of meaning. In practice, this means that the language of the inquiry has important outcomes in and of itself” (p. 166). They go on to encourage effort be put into the choice of words throughout the entire AI that “point to, enliven, and inspire the best in people” (p. 167). Word smith deliberation will impact generative metaphors, whether efforts stop at Figure or move to Ground impact for transformative AI practices, and invoke the positive psychology needed to motivate people to action.

**Focus Group Final Question**

For the purpose of this study, I defined impact as a tangible change in the organization based on the purpose of the consultation and directly correlated to the AI process. This definition was questioned during the focus group discussions. My intent was to ascertain whether my definition was appropriate to use for my study and if AI practitioners had their own definition that may skew the answers, they provided regarding my first research question. Surprisingly, not one of my participants changed my definition. I had expected someone to state that the word *tangible* should not be included in the definition. What was echoed across the interviews and
group discussions was that the word *impact* or *tangible impact* was not a word used in their dialogues with the organizations and is not verbiage that would be used. There was brief discussion about how the word *tangible* could cause some confusion if trying to define that for the organization but it is simply not verbiage used. Within these conversations I questioned whether I was asking the right question when using that verbiage and was assured my question was reasonable. I was, also, reminded during these times that though all of my participants use AI in their work, most do not call it by that name. The assurance is in knowing that what you are doing, or asking, is in the process, not the verbiage.

**Summary of Findings**

The case study analysis presented in this chapter included data from the individual interviews, mini-focus group interviews, and focus group discussions. Consideration was given to the small sample of questionnaires and surveys provided by the participants, as well as the data that was gather from those documents. Through my discussions, interviews, training, and analysis, I was able to determine patterns to classify evidence of impact that could be related back to the direct result of an AI.

Using an iterative process and ad hoc coding, the coding patterns indicated determinants of impact that could be identified as one of three themes, each supported by foundational theories of AI. Themes included cognitive changes or impact that affect what a person believes or how they think about what they know. Changes at this level appear to be the initial step in organizational change. Once these changes occur, a paradigm shift may happen, changing the way a person determines their mindset about themselves and the organization. The next level is the change in behavior for individuals and organizations. Through my analysis of the data I identified determinants of impact that fell into these three theoretical categories. AI practitioners
were able to tell me stories of when they felt they had an impact, which provided the basis to identify how they determined the impact. These determinants were discussed in the mini-focus groups and full focus group where practitioners questioned each other and extended the conversations that explored how impact was viewed.

In this study, as a follow up question, I explored my definition of impact to check the quality of my research question based on how I was thinking about the word. My definition was validated by the participants though the word impact or tangible impact were not verbiage generally used in AI. What was not anticipated was the data trends for the patterns of when and how impact would be determined. Through these discussions, data analysis patterns emerged as to the methods a practitioner might use to determine impact and what type of data they would consider to indicate an impact. There were differences in the type of data collected between academics, which tended to be more theory driven, and dialogic field practitioners who tended to be less theory driven and more client results oriented. How impact is determined is also affected by the industry using AI as well as the size of the group participating in the AI.

Chapter Summary

Using an exploratory, single case study design, I interviewed AI practitioners, conducted mini-focus group discussions and a held a focus group discussion that centered on how these practitioners determined the impacts of their consultation. The purposeful selection of participants was based on their having at least one year of experience using the AI method of organizational development, and using it as their primary methodology. This study included interview data from eight individual AI practitioner interviews, three mini focus group discussions comprised from the eight individuals, and a separate 11-member focus group discussion, as well as samples of tools used to determine impact. Data was analyzed through ad
hoc coding using iterative processes, then categorized into three themes that included cognitive changes, paradigm changes, and behavior changes as evidence of impact. Further analyses and interpretation of these themes, along with implications and recommendations, are discussed in Chapter 5.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter continues the analysis into a discussion of how the data was interpreted, what current literature offered support of the interpretation, and what implications this study may offer to the practice of Appreciative Inquiry. Beginning with a reiteration of the results summary, I will lay the foundation for discussing those results before relating them to current literature, as well as the implications for policy, practice, and theory, concluding with recommendations for further study. In this chapter, emergent, key themes are interpreted and analyzed against the three Interconnected Concepts of AI presented by Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly (2011) to determine if the themes fit the theoretical foundations of AI. Further verification of Key Themes is suggested when analyzed with the 5-D AI Process Model (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) to identify true AI practice. To support AI application of the study results, Key Themes were, also, compared to the Five Principles of AI (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001). Consideration of the principles and process model of AI support the participant attribute of being practitioners of AI and the applicability of their work to this study. Further validation is given to emergent Key Themes by using the Variable Matrix constructed by Bushe and Kassam (2005) and used as a tool to evaluate AI case studies in the literature review as to whether the studies were Transformational.

Additional trends uncovered in the analysis that could affect future implications of this study are also briefly discussed. Emergent data patterns indicated how impact is determined may be influenced by the industry application of the process and the size of the group. Patterns also showed a difference in the type of impact being determined based on whether the practitioner has a strong academic background or is more experienced in dialogic field practices. However, there is indication of a theoretical foundation that could be applied to help practitioners choose the best way to determine impact based on how they are using AI that culminates in a pivotal point to
move people past thoughts into action. An introduction to this pivotal point is outlined in this discussion.

**Summary of Results**

This study was an exploratory case study of AI practitioners that analyzed how they determined an impact of a specific Inquiry they provided. My purpose was to delve into an empirical, critical analysis of the theory and practices of AI. The case study was comprised of purposefully selected volunteers solicited through LinkedIn, The Taos Institute, A Company of Experts, and The Center for Appreciative Inquiry websites. Participants for the study were selected based on having at least one year of experience using AI as a method of organization development and using it as their primary methodology. The study included qualitative interview data from eight individual AI practitioner interviews, three mini focus group discussions comprised from the eight individuals, and a separate 11-member focus group discussion, as well as samples of tools used to determine impact.

Data collected through the interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed through an iterative process of ad hoc coding and member checking to synthesize themes and meaning. The primary goal of the study was to explore the way AI practitioners determine whether they had an impact from their consultation. Data was collected through semistructured interviews centered around the telling of a story of a time when the practitioner felt they had an impact using AI and explaining how they determined that impact. Mini-focus groups were discussions of the self-reported determinants of impact and the study definition of impact as a tangible change in the organization based on the purpose of the consultation and directly correlated to the AI process.
The summation of this study is three themes that emerged from the data as ways in which AI practitioners determine impact:

1. Cognitive Change: Doxastic Logic or Epistemic Logic
2. Mindset Change: Paradigm Shift
3. Behavior Change: Individual or Organizational

The remainder of this chapter will be the discussion of the implications and recommendations based on these themes. The chapter will begin with the discussion of the results and then relate those results to current literature and the study limitations will be explained. Following the results and limitations will be the implications for practice, policy, and theory and the recommendations for further research before concluding the chapter.

**Discussion of the Results**

As stated in Chapter 1, the worldwide, common call to action is for empirical, critical analysis of the theory and practices of AI (Bushe, 1998; Bushe & Marshak, 2011, 2014, 2015; Clarke, n.d.; Conklin, 2009; Grant & Humphries, 2006; Hart, Conklin, & Allen, 2008; Kessler, 2013; Tartell & Vogel, 2017; Willoughby & Tosey, 2007). One of the seminal components of this study topic was the April, 2017 issue of the AI Journal and the call for papers to identify how practitioners identified an impact and the difficulty collecting submissions (Tartell & Vogel, 2017). Though there is a plethora of research on the process of AI and published case studies, there is a chasm in the research regarding the determination of impact. Based on results from this study it is one that can be bridged with a framework of best practices designed to facilitate and promote the use of AI. Having this type of framework would be beneficial to new practitioners or those tasked with presenting AI in a new environment. There is also merit to having a
framework of best practices for impact determination with organizations requesting evidence or return on investment when hiring consultants.

Framework for determinants of AI impact could be added to training programs for business degree patrons or participants of facilitator training such as the one I attended in California. There were several questions during that experience and during the subsequent web conference call regarding “selling” the concept of AI to organizational leaders who are data driven and within companies that are using the process with their human capital.

**Summation of Results**

The results of this study support the initial responses given in the query of how an AI practitioner would determine whether they have had an impact: *it depends*. In this exploration of how practitioners make an impact determination it was thought I would be able to identify and define a clear-cut tool to be used within the AI process that could be transcribed across all industries. Though that revelation did not occur, this study did provide a framework to establish best practices for determining impact that could be situational. Consideration of the theoretical foundations of AI were important to include in this study to help validate the results. As the analysis iterations helped key themes emerge it was imperative to make sure the data was supported by the practices and principles of current AI. Table 7 shows the comparative analysis summary of the emergent, Key Themes with the Five Principles of AI, the 5-D Process Model, AI Interconnected Concepts, and a Variable Matrix used to evaluate AI Case Studies for evidence of transformative impact.
Table 7
Comparative Analysis of Key Themes to Current AI Theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current AI Theory</th>
<th>Cognitive Change</th>
<th>Mindset Change</th>
<th>Behavior Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Five Principles of AI</td>
<td>Constructionist, Simultaneity, Poetic, Anticipatory, &amp; Positive</td>
<td>Constructionist, Simultaneity, Poetic, Anticipatory, &amp; Positive</td>
<td>Constructionist, Simultaneity, Poetic, Anticipatory, &amp; Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-D AI Process Model</td>
<td>Define, Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny</td>
<td>Define, Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny</td>
<td>Define, Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI Interconnected Concepts</td>
<td>AI is a philosophy of knowledge</td>
<td>AI is a principle-based intervention theory; social construction of reality</td>
<td>AI can be applied to any process &amp; methodology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AI, as a process, is cyclical and interdependent within each of the processes, which is clearly demonstrated in the overlap of concepts within Table 7. Holding that fluidity to each of the theoretical frameworks lends more credibility to the applicability of the Key Themes identified in this study to AI.

AI is often used for organizational or group planning. However, all groups are made of individuals which are the key components to the culture and functions of an organization. For this reason it is imperative to separate the determinants of AI impact into the mechanisms for which they are most appropriate when planning an inquiry. The mechanisms for impact identified and discussed in this study are summarized below:
• Cognitive Impact or Change: The first level of change is through an individual in the way they believe, or perceive, the experience in which they are engaged. This cognitive reasoning about belief is doxastic logic and is, also, tied to the energy of the group. When people begin to change their perceptions of an engagement, they have the potential to spread that energy to others; whether positive or negative. A change in perspective can also influence the lens which is used to examine other types of cognition as would be expected with epistemic logic. For example, an individual is more likely to find solutions in data sets when looking at them with a positive perspective than with a negative one.

• Mindset Change: Once a person or group is motivated to shift their energy and have a change in their cognitive logics they are open to shifting their paradigm, marking the pivotal moment when they are able to move from thoughts to actions. This researcher holds the idea that creating a paradigm shift and crossing that lexicon should be the primary goal of an AI in order to have an impact.

• Behavior Change: Behavior changes occur at individual and organizational levels. Most individual behavior changes are within the scope of a micro level of organizational behavior whereas the umbrella of organizational culture would encompass the macro level. Within the context of this study both aspects need to be considered as well as the development of an organizational common language.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

I had originally only considered AI as a method of OD, but see now that it is an unbound, ongoing process “used for change initiatives, strategic planning, project planning, and meeting design” (Center for Appreciative Inquiry, n.d., p. 4, Day 4). I, also, originally thought impact could be easily identified, though not commonly spoken of in the literature review. However, my
interviews and group discussions did not show easy identification of impacts. What did emerge from my case study was a data pattern that fit the theoretical foundations of AI and allowed delineation into three distinct ways to determine an impact, which I identified as my key themes: cognitive changes, mindset changes, and behavior changes. Another pattern that emerged from the data was that the determinant of impact was more relational to how AI was being used than as a process strategy; the defining determinant was based on whether the AI was for individuals, groups, or organizations.

**Cognitive Change: Doxastic Logic and Epistemic Logic**

Doxastic Logic is founded in what people believe to be true; that is, a reasoning that justifies beliefs, and can best be exemplified in this way: perception as reality. On the other hand, Epistemic Logic is concerned with what is known, or a reasoning about how knowledge is determined. As reported in Chapter 4, the evidence of impact related to Doxastic Logic came from the practitioner use of surveys, interviews, and observations of how people interacted with one another. Epistemic Logic changes how we know what we know and the reasoning we use to know it. The evidence of impact that could be related to Epistemic Logic came from the practitioner use of group discussion centered around organizational data or recounting firsthand knowledge of events. The evaluation of cognitive changes was predominantly determined when practitioners worked with individuals as in job coaching under therapeutic conditions such as couple’s therapy. This level of impact was not reported to be utilized by practitioners in my case study when consulting for organizations.

**Doxastic logic.** Doxastic Logic was evaluated by practitioners through the use of surveys, interviews, and behavior observations. Each of these assessment methods has value in determining a cognitive change in the way individuals believe, or perceive, a situation or their
relationship to that situation. Fink (2003) recommended the use of qualitative survey analysis when exploring perceptions of meanings and experiences (p. 61). The second determinant of doxastic logic as a means to identify cognitive change was interviews and is considered to be very effective and efficient. Using self report is the easiest and fastest way to collect data (Kahtri, 2015). Self-report can be survey or interview but can have drawbacks because the answers provided may be given based on what the respondent thinks the answer should be instead of reporting their true belief. Therefore, behavior observations are the most reliable determinants of the three Doxastic Logic methods of collecting data since it is objective. “Most methods of behavioral observation provide quantitative and objective data that can be used to determine current levels of behavior, to set goals for behavioral improvement, and to measure change following intervention plans” (Psychology, n.d., para.1). As stated, when responding to a survey or interview question the answers may be given to provide what the participant thinks the researcher would like the answer to be, however, the unobtrusive observation of individual behavior and interpersonal interactions is best to determine the frequency (how often it occurs), duration (how long it lasts), and magnitude (intensity) of a behavior making changes in behavior easier to quantify. This researcher does not discount the value or validity of a survey or interview method to assess doxastic logic, but it is my opinion that the most reliable determinant of this type of change would be behavioral observations.

One of the primary observations made by AI practitioners was a shift in energy during the process. Though the concept is not evasive to understand, it is elusive to describe. “Although energy is a concept that is implied in many motivational theories, [it] is hardly ever explicitly mentioned or researched” (Schippers & Hogenes, 2011, p. 193). For this study and the context in which participants have used the term it will be defined as “the psychological state in which
individuals experience both a sense of vitality and a sense of learning at work” (Spreitzer et al. 2005, p. 538). Schippers & Hogenes (2011) discuss three forms of theories that describe energy gains that include thriving, engagement, and human flourishing (p. 194). They reported a distinction between being high on energy and being able to energize others with organizational energy growing from a few key individuals. The authors also described three energy dimension characteristics that included energy amount, energy stability, and energy direction. Schippers & Hogenes posited transformational leaders are generally high energy, themselves, but also able to energize and inspire others to work towards common goals. Therefore, it is critical to acknowledge energy change as an integral factor in the doxastic logic change a person will experience as the principal needed to experience impact.

**Epistemic logic.** As reported in Chapter 4, Epistemic Logic changes how we know what we know and the reasoning we use to know it. The evidence of impact that could be related to Epistemic Logic came from the practitioner use of group discussion centered around organizational data or recounting firsthand knowledge of events. There are several ways this type of cognitive reasoning has been used. Some practitioners will use organizational performance data (i.e. student state assessment data) and guide participants to a new way of looking at the data. A teacher may know that their students are performing at 42% of the state average for a learning objective but may not know why. By teaching them to look at the individual standards that are being tested, and reviewing the student answer selections made for that question, it may be possible to determine whether the way the lesson taught is the reason the student’s chose a particular answer. The discovery may be made to keep the lesson but say something differently within the lesson. Or, if the student answer pattern for that particular question is random then it may be the way the standard was taught that needs to be changed. This would be a time to
collaborate to see which students performed highest on that question and use that lesson as the foundation for restructuring the learning standard. Knowing how the teacher’s students performed is not enough. Learning to think differently about that data to understand the why and what to do next is the change in cognitive behavior that needs to happen. In this study there was little use of this type of cognitive change. The limited scope of this change is attributed to not having a participant who gave an example of a building level, or teacher Professional Learning Community (PLC), coaching scenario, however, it was eluded to in conversation prompting this example for discussion.

**Mindset Change: Paradigm Shift**

The cornerstone of a paradigm shift is the movement from a deficit-based methodology for organizational change to a new paradigm model of using AI as “as a way of seeing and being in the world” (Watkins, Mohr, & Kelly, 2011, p. 17). As previously reported, this was the most emphasized way to determine an impact in my study, yet seemed to be the most difficult example to describe by the participants. Practitioners indicated immediate impacts during the AI through the cognitive changes that would, subsequently, lead to a paradigm shift that were easily identified in the encounter, yet, depending on the length of the AI, they may or may not have been a witness to the shift. I found the paradigm shift to be the cornerstone impact of the study. Going back to my participant example that disclosed this impact as this point being “…the integration of their seeing and hearing about what they might do differently”. Again, this integration being the pivotal point where the person moves from a cognitive change into a paradigm shift; the point *where* the paradigm shift occurs and a *physical shift in the way they think*. This point is where thoughts become actions and impact is evidenced.
Fonagy and Allison (2014) wrote *The Role of Mentalizing and Epistemic Trust in the Therapeutic Relationship*. In this paper mentalizing is defined as “the capacity to understand other’s and one’s own behavior in terms of mental states” (abstract). They went on to describe this as the “defining human social and psychological achievement” (abstract). They continued with describing mentalizing as a “generic way of establishing epistemic trust (trust in the authenticity and personal relevance of interpersonally transmitted information)” (p. 372). The key takeaway from Fonagy and Allison’s paper is that this point allows people to learn socially from new experiences and “achieve change in their understanding of their social relationships and their own behavior and actions” (p. 372). The most profound concept they posited was:

The very experience of having our subjectivity understood—of being mentalized—is a necessary trigger for us to be able to receive and learn from the social knowledge that has the potential to change our perception of ourselves and our social world (Fonagy & Allison, 2014, p. 372).

This trigger, identified by Fonagy and Allison (2014), discussed the pivotal point this researcher believes to be the fulcrum that creates the transition between thoughts and action; between cognitive change and behavioral change. This researcher has created the Paradigm Fulcrum to help depict the pivotal point (see Figure 6).

*Figure 6*. Paradigm shift fulcrum.
Behavior Changes: Individual or Organizational

As previously stated, the evidence of impact that could be related to individual behavior changes is tied directly to the new learning people get from what they believe (Doxastic), how they think (Epistemic), and the mindset (Paradigm) they hold. Though individual behavior changes are an expectation of the process in order to make the organizational changes, individual change was not the focus of AI as a determinant of impact within an organization within this study.

Individual behavior change. All of the changes that scaffold from what a person believes, to how they think, to how they act, culminate into the organizational behavior as the individuals become a more unified, collective entity. The interactions of these persons become the culture and function of the organization. For this reason, this researcher believes individual behavior is intrinsically linked to organizational behavior and should be more acutely considered when consulting organizations. There is another consideration to bear when looking at individual behavior change. A review of behavior theories for the Health Psychology Review journal by Davis et. al. (2014) delineated a gap between theories of behavior and theories of change with the following statement (p. 326):

Theories of behaviour tend to be linear, and explain the reasons why behaviour may occur by considering a number of predictors and their associations with one another and how these could influence the likelihood of a particular behaviour (Agar, 2008; Conner & Norman, 2005; Glanz & Rimer, 1997; Head & Noar, 2013). Theories of change tend to be more cyclical and identify interactional and dynamic behaviour change processes (Agar, 2008; Head & Noar, 2013). In practice, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two and some theories could be viewed as both (Davis, et al., 2014, p. 326).
AI as a practice is a cyclical process and theoretically lends itself to a closer relationship with the theories of change over theories of behavior. However, with individual changes that must occur within cognitive and paradigm frameworks, this researcher agrees that both theoretical bases should be employed when striving for individual behavior changes.

**Organizational behavior change.** Essentially, two levels of organizational behavior may be considered for change by practitioners. The first is a micro level which encompass cognition, decision making, learning, motivation, negotiation, impressions, group process, stereotyping, and power and influence. The second is a macro level and covers organizations as social systems, dynamics of change, markets, relationships between organizations and their environments, as well as identity in organizational process, how social movements influence markets, and the power of social networks (Investopedia, n.d., par 10.). It is easy to identify how the influence of the individual affects the micro level of the organizational behavior even though most AI practitioners in this study provided stories of being consulted for their influence on the macro level of organizational behavior.

As disclosed in chapter 4, I found it interesting when discussing organizational behavior with the practitioners in this study was the emphasis on a common language for their AI participants. Finding common language was, also, a point made across all study participant industries as well as in the collaborative groups of my AI Facilitator Training. In support of this practice, Dr. Jan West (n.d.) of the National Business Research Institute aptly stated, “Effective communication is so critical to the efficient functioning of an organization and satisfaction of employees that it has been called the building block of an organization”. West defined the most effective communication strategy as having a common language and outlined these benefits of creating an organizational common language (per. 3):
• A common language assures that all members of the organization understand expectations. Misunderstandings are minimized so time formerly spent on correcting errors can be spent on productivity.
• Customers, clients, or patients hear consistency throughout the organization, which gives them a sense that there is cohesiveness and reliability and enhances the image of the organization.
• Employees and staff gain a sense of identity and belonging to a community.
• The common language provides a sort of shorthand among the organization’s community of management and staff.
• When management and staff speak the same language, there is a feeling of camaraderie and relationships between them are stronger.
• A common language creates a sense of culture for those working within the organization, which is a major factor in its success.

The literature lends theoretical support and credibility to the findings of this study. In order to determine an impact with an AI, some sort of change must take place from the conditions that was present prior to the AI to those conditions present after the AI. The changes that can indicate an impact will occur at a cognitive, mindset, or behavioral level, with a pivotal point of change between cognition and behavior. The pivotal point is what I identify as the fulcrum between thoughts and actions, and when a paradigm shift occurs. Therefore, this is what I am terming the Paradigm Fulcrum.

Limitations

This section details the study limitations along with possible modifications that could have improved the study. The following discussion includes my role as the instrument of the
study, difficulty finding participants, inaccurate participant responses, difficulty forming focus groups, and difficulty identifying impact determinants. Wargo (2015) defined research limitations as areas, or variables, for which the researcher has no control over. Limitations may include sample sizes, methodology constraints, length of the study, and response rate. For this study, the following limitations are considered (Simon & Goes, 2013):

**Researcher as a Limitation**

The initial limitation and primary obstacle of this study was the influence I would have on the results as the researcher. Creswell (2013) explained how my own beliefs and philosophical assumptions can affect the study. As previously stated, I began this query with the idea of finding an actual tool that could be used across all industries to gauge impact for an AI. I had a postpositive interpretive framework surrounding my epistemological philosophical assumptions; I was looking for *tangible* evidence. This assumption made the beginning of my research difficult and I overlooked evidence of impact in my initial interviews. After reviewing Seidman (2013), I was reminded to acknowledge how my personal epistemology would shape the interpretation of my data. I needed to step back from the data and use an iterative process with constant comparison to chunk, code, and classify data. Throughout the ad hoc stages, I looked for emergent patterns in the codes and was able to overcome my experiential bias. It is imperative to have a clear purpose and multiple data sources in case study research. The overarching standards to support the research goal are the elimination of researcher bias, rival explanations, and unethical behavior (Yin, 2014). Favorable researcher attributes defined by Yin (2014) include asking good questions with fair interpretations; listening to responses openly; maintain adaptability in the study with new information; acquire a firm understanding of the
topic being investigated; avoid biases with contrary evidence; and know how to conduct research ethically.

**Finding Participants as a Limitation**

This study focused on a small number of participants, which were members of varying professional organizations. The original study design included four AI practitioners and four of their business affiliate to whom they had provided AI to talk about impact from the two perspectives. Two limitations arose from this prospective AI practitioner population; first, finding professionals who would take time from their schedules to participate in the study, and, second, soliciting their participation more than once to clarify responses and join a focus group discussion. An unforeseen limitation was the confidentiality factor of not disclosing who their clients were.

Adjustments were made in study participant requests to increase the number of AI practitioners from four to eight and the request for business affiliate participation was eliminated, which provided a better response to my participant solicitation. However, I still struggled to find enough participants. Originally, I only used two professional sites to post study invitations and after two rounds of invitations I only collected three participants. I added two more professional sites with my third study request and was able to obtain the eight members needed to meet my study design.

**Participant Responses as a Limitation**

As indicated when addressing my researcher assumptions as a limitation, I expected my research question asking how AI practitioners determine an impact was straightforward enough to solicit the answers sought in the study, which was not the case. Unequivocally, the response was, “It depends”. From this stance as an opening response it was very difficult to guide the
semistructured interviews to identifying determinants of impact. Several times conversations wondered into measurements of impact, which was not the research question. I believed it was a problem with the wording of my research questions that made it so difficult to answer, yet, it was such a straightforward question I was not sure how to make the needed change. As I considered AI as a process I was reminded that it began with telling a story of when they enjoyed their work (or some positive direction) to help people get into the right framework for AI. I decided my research question needed to be framed the same way and began my next round of interviews asking the participants to tell me about a time they felt they had an impact with AI. Then, I asked them to tell me how they determined the impact in that story. This process helped guide the participant to the right framework to answer my question and provided the data needed for the study.

Another limitation feature from participant responses was the ability to provide a tool or document for my review as evidence of impact. I did not doubt people checked for impact in their work, but I assumed it would be through written surveys and questionnaires that could be shared as examples. I had, also, counted on these documents to be my third, study data source and was concerned that I was only able to collect one such example. What I learned was that impact is self-determined by those requesting an AI. Being self-determined means the determinant of impact is so specific the practitioner did not keep a copy of the tool, nor could they be shared since they were covered under confidentiality agreements.

**Forming Focus Groups as a Limitation**

The eight individual study participants were spread out across the United States, Canada, and Australia and from different industries. Coordinating time to speak to each other for a focus group discussion was very difficult. Seidman (2013) recommends at least six members to a focus
group and three times my scheduled web conference calls were limited to 2 or 3 members due to conflicts from participant obligations. Therefore, the data was still collected but indicated as from a mini-focus group (Seidman, 2013). Still seeking a supple third data source and striving to make a full focus group with at least six members I was able to meet both needs when attending the AI Facilitator training in California. At this conference I was able to hold an 11-member focus group of practitioners not involved in my original eight participants, which qualified them as a third data source.

**Identifying Determinants of Impact as a Limitation**

In Chapter 1 I had identified a potential limitation of the practitioners being able to identify determinants of impact, which was originally difficult to solicit from interviews, but my ability to identify emergent themes was just as daunting. This difficulty arose from my postpositive interpretive assumptions and was not overcome until I revisited Seidman’s (2013) advise to acknowledge how my own consciousness would influence the data interpretation. This reminder helped me stop trying to find data to answer my question and let the data emerge through the iterative coding process.

**Implications of the Results for Policy, Practice, and Theory**

From the mid-1990’s to present, researchers have identified a need for empirical, critical analysis of AI practices. McNamara (2012) called for a link between content and processes of AI. Bushe and Marshak (2015) noted nearly all published studies were deemed successful, or impactful, to the organization. However, studies of actual rates of impact are far below 50% for AI intervention (Beer, Eisenstat, & Spector, 1990; Zachrison & Freedman, 2003). Having impact rates far below 50% does not support the published study rate of “nearly all”. Critical debate over whether AI was impactful and how that could be determined is still missing from the
analytical discussions in current literature. There is a chasm between academics regarding narrative and interpretive premises and dialogic field practices (Bushe & Marshak, 2013) and the need to identify impact is an industry gap (Tartell & Vogel, 2017). There is, also, the need for a link between content and processes of AI. In this section I will discuss the implication of the study results in terms of policy, practice, and theory.

**Study Implications for Policy**

At this time there is not a specific license requirement for professionals wanting to practice Appreciative Inquiry, or any other form of Organization Development. However, there are several certification programs available to help demonstrate a proficiency in methodology and many, if not all, come into the industry with a business background or degree. To open the discussion on policy implications I refer to the *Ethical Guidelines and Professional Standards for Organization Development and Group Process Consultants* (Ethical Guidelines) as published by the International Association for Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes (I.A.G.P.) (2010).

An AI practitioner must “recognize the importance of both the process and the content in the completion of the task or work goal” (I.A.G.P., p. 2). In the Ethical Guidelines, process is defined as emotional ambiance, what is implied, and the organizational culture. Content is defined as the communication content specific to the problem-solving or planning behavior. The value is placed on *both* process and content with practitioners focusing on improving process while organizations focusing on content, or task (p. 2).

As previously disclosed, McNamara (2012) has called for a link between content and process of AI. My study offers a bridge between content and process by identifying impacts from a cognitive perspective that must be engaged before the paradigm can be shifted. If the paradigm
fulcrum is not tipped with changes in how people believe and think the behavior changes needed for transformation cannot happen. In a personal communication with Gervase Bushe (December 24, 2017) discussing assessing the effects of AI, he agreed with a reported statement by Kathy Dannemiller (n.d.) "if you have to measure it, it didn't work". Bushe clarified that he would “take [that] to mean that when an OD intervention works, everyone can see the change that has taken place”. In this communication, Bushe continue with the insight that knowing it worked “is different from understanding WHY it worked, and that is what I have been encouraging us to study so we can identify the important contingencies and design elements, and parse out which arguments are valid” (emphasis in original personal communication). This exploration of how practitioners determine an impact in AI delved into the theoretical foundations as to why those changes should be considered impacts of practice. This study, therefore, is a contributing piece to understanding why an AI works, which will help evaluate contingencies and design elements.

**Study Implications for Practice**

Continuing with the allusion by Bushe that critical understanding of why AI works is imperative to practice design. When planning an AI, knowing the group or individual level of consultation should guide the strategies used to engage the participants and help identify goals for the organization. The disconnect that emerged in my study was two-fold: the impact of individual cognitive changes in group or organizational AI was not considered and the difference in the way participants involved in academia and participants from a business background but working in academia looked at determinants of impact.

Bushe and Marshak (2013) identified a gap between academics regarding narrative and interpretive premises and dialogic field practices but this study found a chasm between academics and field practices in AI that could cause a loss of impact and credibility for the
industry if the practitioner is unable to bridge that chasm. This was exemplified during the facilitator training and subsequent web conference call as described in Chapter 4. It is possible that this study, and others like it, could define evidence-based ways to determine impact that would utilize a reverse engineering design by starting with the end in mind. When an organization wants to focus on content the practitioner could have a more foundational argument for promoting process as a means to achieving content goals. Understanding the pivotal points of an AI, like the Paradigm Fulcrum I described, and which elements are necessary to move individuals from beliefs and thoughts to action and behavior change may be key to improving field practices. This understanding could also impact the theory of AI as a practice.

**Study Implications on Theory**

Emergent themes led me to theoretical searches for why I would accept them as evidence of impact. Identifying *how* practitioners determine impact was the answer to my research question, but understanding *why* that determinant would be considered an impact was necessary to validate the actual impacts. AI is currently based on two theoretical foundations: paradigm shift and theories of behavior as related to individual learning and organizational learning. What this study implies is a more comprehensive theoretical framework is needed to better scaffold the field practices and evaluate the contingencies and design elements when planning an AI.

Cognitive changes based on doxastic and epistemic logic should have theoretical foundations in qualitative survey analysis as a means of exploring perceptions and meanings (Fink, 2003). In this bound study only one of the participants provided a survey used as a tool to determine impact. Having a resource dependent on the number of the group of participants that is best at assessing doxastic and epistemic logic, based on evidenced-based research, could yield more evidence to direct the path to the Paradigm Fulcrum. Theoretical research on the crafting of
interview questions should be included in the framework as a means of cognitive change. The mere asking of questions can cause an impact. Asking the right questions can impact the organization. Adding a theoretical basis for unobtrusive observation is another component to making cognitive changes. Where an individual may skew data collected via survey or interview based on what they think the researcher wants the answer to be, unobtrusive observation creates the space for individuals to act and interact naturally, providing true insight to their feelings and thoughts.

Including theoretical frameworks for data analysis should be a contributing factor, as well. The example in this chapter was to help teachers understand how to drill down into student performance data to better guide instruction and intervention. Teaching people how to think about what they know, or comprehend data they are given from their organization, is a component I did not find in the literature as it pertains to AI. Nor was it something mentioned by any of the practitioners, which may be due to the practitioner focusing on process instead of the content as indicated in the I.A.G.P. Ethical Guidelines document. The ability to facilitate discussions and help people begin to look at data in new ways would help bridge the gap between the content, what we know, and the process, what we do.

With all participants, and nearly all literature reviewed, touting a change in energy as a primary evidence of impact, adding a theoretical framework from energy gains to include thriving, engagement, and human flourishing makes sense (Schippers & Hogenes, 2011). Observing an energy change in the group is the approaching point for the Paradigm Fulcrum and must be understood better. As described earlier in this chapter, differing energy dimensions include the amount of energy, the stability of the energy, and the direction of that energy. If the energy is detected, will the facilitator know how to guide that energy during the AI process?
Having a facilitator that is high on energy does not translate into the ability to energize others (Schippers & Hogenes, 2011).

Theories related to mentalizing as described by Fonagy and Allison (2014) should be inscribed into AI practices as “the capacity to understand others’ and one’s own behavior in terms of mental states” (abstract). They posited the profound concept that being mentalized is the ability trigger to “receive and learn from the social knowledge that has the potential to change our perception of ourselves and our social world” (p. 372). Here is where I postulated the Paradigm Fulcrum tips to transition thoughts and action or between cognitive change and behavior change.

Theoretical implications of this study should reach into the classrooms for students of organization development as psychology and business merge to tip the Paradigm Fulcrum. The classroom suggestions would be updates to textbooks, facilitator training materials, practicum experiences, and post educational support and training. Field practice implications with an expanded theoretical framework would provide a more skilled AI structured and designed-based regarding strategies to reach the Paradigm Fulcrum.

**Future Directions for Research**

The guiding question for my research has been asking how AI practitioners determine an impact in AI. Before designing my study, I wanted to evaluate AI as a practice; the process that makes the magic happen. I did not understand why it was magical but for all that I could read about it, everyone seemed to concur. Through the process my interest changed from evaluating the process as a cycle to exploring how practitioners knew it worked; or that there was an impact, positive or negative. The iterative process involved and learning to remove my own bias and epistemology from the process was slow and painstaking, however, the emergent themes
uncovered something I had not found in my literature review. There was a *how* to the process. More important, the patterns indicated there may be a *why* in the process based on group size; whether working with individuals or organizations and whether working on beliefs (doxastic logic) or knowledge (epistemic logic). This led me to the understanding of a pivotal point where change can happen: the Paradigm Fulcrum.

Being able to understand and implement the Paradigm Fulcrum requires an expanded perspective of the theoretical foundations of AI to include:

- Theories on questioning participants for authentic self-reporting
- Theories on data analysis to help people think differently about what they know
- Theories on energy and its’ dimensions
- Theories on mentalization to trigger the tipping of the Paradigm Fulcrum

While this study was not designed to understand the *why* of AI impact, I hope that it will open a new dialogue and become a part of the continual evolution of AI practice and theory.

**Conclusion**

This chapter delineated the emergent data from the study. In that, the key themes for cognitive changes, paradigm shifts, and behavioral changes became apparent and were related to current theoretical frameworks. Through the iterative process of analyzing the interviews a new concept was derived for a pivotal point that could be the fulcrum that brought about a change; where impact is assured. In this study I termed that point the Paradigm Fulcrum and define it as being the point where thoughts become actions or cognitive changes transfer to behavior changes. Further research should be done to verify or deny the Paradigm Fulcrum concept. If proven to be a pivotal point and lend to the discussions of *why* AI works this can have strong
effects on the contingencies and design of OD and reframe the way practitioners are prepared and how field practices are completed.
References


Bushe, G., Marshak, R.J. (2009). Revisioning organization development:


McNamara, C. (2012, March 5). *History of organization development (part 2 of 6): The


Intervention strategies: Developing emergent pragmatic theories of change. In W.
W. Burke (Ed.), Current Issue and Strategies in Organization Development (pp.

Study Research. A chapter in the Encyclopedia of Case Study Research, SAGE
/Article_n36.html.


Watkins, J.M., & Mohr, B. J. (2001). Appreciative inquiry: Change at the speed of


Publications.


Appendix A: Request for Input Email

My name is Kim Davis and I am currently working to complete my dissertation in pursuit of my Doctorate in Education in Transformational Leadership with Concordia University-Portland. The title of my dissertation is *Determining the Impact of an Appreciative Inquiry Consultation*. As the title indicates my study centers around Appreciative Inquiry, which is an approach to organizational changes that is centered on positive questioning and focuses on what is working within organizations to build relationships between colleagues and transform organizations. My research interest is determining the impact that Appreciative Inquiry practices have had affecting positive outcomes by exploring practitioners methods. To identify determinants of impact, I will be conducting 45–60 minute interviews with four AI practitioners and four organizational leaders who participated in the consultation. These interviews will be followed up with a single Focus Group discussion with all eight participants. My inquiry to you, today, is a request to field-test my interview questions for industry relevancy and whether the questions are clear and make sense to you. I would, also, welcome your participation in my interviews, should you be so willing.
Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Email

My name is Kim Davis and I am currently working to complete my dissertation in pursuit of my Doctorate in Education in Transformational Leadership with Concordia University–Portland. The title of my dissertation is *Determining the Impact of an Appreciative Inquiry Consultation*. As the title indicates my study centers around Appreciative Inquiry, which is an approach to organizational changes that is centered on positive questioning and focuses on what is working within organizations to build relationships between colleagues and transform organizations. My research interest is in determining how Appreciative Inquiry practices have had an impact in affecting positive outcomes.

To identify the determinants of impact I am requesting AI practitioners to have a 15–20 minute reflective conversation with someone they have provided consultative services using four guiding questions for their dialogue. I am asking that the conversation is recorded and emailed to me for transcription. After the transcription is finished, I will submit a copy to you for an accuracy check. Transcription should only take 24 hours. Once the transcription is approved, I will schedule a 15–20-minute interview with both parties together via WebEx to ask three follow up questions or gain any clarification needed from the transcript. This will be recorded for transcription with a copy of the transcript submitted to the participants, again, for accuracy checking. I am hoping for your participation or a referral to someone who may be able to participate. I am anticipating having these conversations completed within two weeks and defending my dissertation within 8 weeks. Thank you for your consideration of participation in my dissertation research.

The projected timeline for time commitment:
• Day 1: 15 to 20 - Minute semistructured dialogue between AI Practitioner and Organizational Leader, Send the recording of dialogue to Kim Davis at [email redacted] for transcription.

• Day 2: Participants review transcription for accuracy and schedule interview.

• Day 3: 15 to 20 - Minute semistructured interview with AI practitioner, organizational leader, and Kim Davis, researcher.

• Day 4: Participants review transcription for accuracy.
Appendix C: Demographic and Participant Qualification Questions

Research Question: How do Appreciative Inquiry Practitioners determine impact?

1. How many years have you been an organizational development practitioner?
2. Do you currently practice appreciative inquiry?
3. How many years have you practiced appreciative inquiry?
4. Is appreciative inquiry your primary method of organization development?
5. How many times per year do you conduct appreciative inquiries?
Appendix D: Semistructured Interview Questions

1. Discuss a time when you felt your AI consultation had an impact on the organization?
   Please provide as many details as possible without compromising any confidentiality.
   (Purpose/goals of the AI consultation, basic structure of the process, participant response
   and level of engagement, etc.)

2. Describe how each of you determined any impact from that intervention?

3. Which specific tools, measures, or applications, do you use to identify the impact of your
   Appreciative Inquiry consultations? Please answer this from both the AI practitioner
   perspective and the organizational leader perspective.

4. Would you be willing to provide a sample (blank or without confidential information) of
   the documents or tools used to determine the impact?

5. For this study, I defined impact as a tangible change that is a direct affect of the
   appreciative inquiry. Would you agree with that definition, or would you make a change?
Appendix E: Participant Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Research Study Title: Measuring the Impact of Appreciative Inquiry Consultations
Principal Investigator: Kimberly Davis
Research Institution: Concordia University Department of Education
Faculty Advisor: Dr. James Therrell

Purpose and what you will be doing:
Currently, I am working to complete my dissertation in pursuit of my Doctorate in Education in Transformational Leadership with Concordia University-Portland. The title of my dissertation is Measuring the Impact of Appreciative Inquiry. As the title indicates my study centers around Appreciative Inquiry [AI], which is an approach to organizational changes that is centered on positive questioning, and that focuses on what is working within organizations to build relationships between colleagues and transform organizations. My research interest is in how to measure any impact of Appreciative Inquiry practices by finding ways of measuring Appreciative Inquiry practices. To identify any measures of impact, I am conducting 45-60 minute semi-structured interviews with AI practitioners and organizational administrators who have participated in an AI consultation.

I will ask for individual interviews to be conducted via WebEx that can be audio-recorded for later transcription. I will then ask for all participants to join an online WebEx discussion as a Focus Group. The Focus Group discussion will be audio-recorded for later transcription and will take approximately one hour.

Risks:
There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, we will protect your information. I will record interviews. The recording will be transcribed by me, the principal investigator, and the recording will be deleted when the transcription is completed. Any data you provide will be coded so people who are not the investigator cannot link your information to you. Any name or identifying information you give will be kept securely via electronic encryption on my password protected computer locked inside the cabinet in my office. The recording will be deleted as soon as possible; all other study documents will kept secure for 3 years and then be destroyed.
Benefits:
Information you provide will help identify ways of measuring the impact of an Appreciative Inquiry consultation. You could benefit from this by having more ways to measure impact in your AI practice.

Confidentiality:
This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

Right to Withdraw:
Your participation is greatly appreciated, and I assure you that the questions I will be asking are professional in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty nor any repercussion for not participating or discontinuing participation. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, I will stop asking you questions.

Contact Information:
You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Kimberly Davis at [email].

If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email obranch@cu-portland.edu or call 503-493-6390).
Your Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

____________________________________  _________________  _________________
Participant Name                      Date

____________________________________  _________________  _________________
Participant Signature                 Date

____________________________________  _________________  _________________
Investigator Name                     Date

____________________________________  _________________  _________________
Investigator Signature                Date

Investigator: Kim Davis  email:
c/o: Professor James A. Therrell;
Concordia University – Portland
2811 NE Holman Street
Portland, Oregon 97221
512.653.9215
Appendix F: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does “fraudulent” mean?

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics, and other multi-media files appropriated from one source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

What is “unauthorized” assistance?

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.
Statement of Original Work (Continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

2. Where information and/or materials from outside has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

Kimberly K. Davis

Digital Signature

Kimberly K. Davis

Name (Typed)

December 2, 2018

Date