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Faculty of Business Economics

Master of Management

Master's thesis

Application of Appreciative Inquiry for Organizational Changes during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Melisa Yildiz

Thesis presented in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management, specialization Strategy and Innovation Management

SUPERVISOR :

Prof. dr. dr. Frank LAMBRECHTS

MENTOR :

Mevrouw Nguyen Phuong Anh DUONG



UHASSELT

KNOWLEDGE IN ACTION

www.uhasselt.be
Universiteit Hasselt
Campus Hasselt:
Martelarenlaan 42 | 3500 Hasselt
Campus Diepenbeek:
Agoralaan Gebouw D | 3590 Diepenbeek

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This master thesis was written during the COVID-19 crisis in 2020-2021. This global health crisis might have had an impact on the (writing) process, the research activities and the research results that are at the basis of this thesis.

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Melisa Yıldız
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Executive Summary

"When written in Chinese, the word 'crisis' is composed of two characters. One represents danger and the other represents opportunity."

-John F. Kennedy

The COVID-19 pandemic has the world under its influence since early 2020 and has brought irreversible effects to the reality that we live in. Globally, individuals to communities and countries have been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. An undeniable effect of the COVID-19 crisis is on the organizations. The crisis caused many organizations, if not all, to go through transformational changes to adapt to the circumstances emerged with it. To be able to manage that change, there are several organizational development interventions that organizations can consult. One of those interventions that proved itself to be massively impactful and successful is Appreciative Inquiry. Appreciative Inquiry is an approach that seeks to manage strengths-based innovation by engaging all the stakeholders inside an organization through generative practices that facilitate self-determined change. Appreciative Inquiry accomplishes that by a set of implementation processes. However, this approach has never been examined whether it holds when applied during a crisis, especially such a big one as the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic. Therefore, there is a gap to be filled with the discovery of the answers to the question "How can Appreciative Inquiry (AI) help organizations go through transformational changes during the COVID-19 pandemic?". To approach this gap as extensively as possible, this study examines (i) "Which features of Appreciative Inquiry can be particularly useful in a time of a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic?", (ii) "How can Appreciative Inquiry implementation processes (e.g., 4D cycle) be modified to meet the current situation of the world during a crisis, namely the COVID-19 pandemic?" and (iii) "Are there any organizational factors that can facilitate the implementation of Appreciative Inquiry during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic?".

To find answers to these questions, since the insights and background of the implications were at utmost importance, a qualitative research methodology was followed. The scholars and practitioners from the field of Appreciative Inquiry with experience in facilitating practices of different scales and contexts during the COVID-19 pandemic were interviewed. The grounded interpretive theory was followed until the theoretical saturation, a point where the same patterns were obtained in interviews, was reached. The participants had the choice to stay anonymous or not. All interviews were transcribed, patterns were identified and analyzed.

The results of the study support that Appreciative Inquiry is of help to organizations navigating through crises. When it comes to how exactly and with which features it can be of assistance, several aspects were found very valuable. The first thing that Appreciative Inquiry is found to have an impact on managing the crisis is that it brings people to a perspective where the crisis is perceived as an opportunity. This is the reason why the word "appreciation" is used in the name of the practice. The appreciation feature is to acknowledge the reality of the world and, on the contrary of what is

thought, not labeling experiences as “good” or “bad” and focus on just one side. This work carries even greater importance in complex times like crises since people tend to focus on just one side and neglect the other since this results in an ineffective organizational attempt. In such challenging times, a big challenge for all organizations is to navigate through the world's uncertainty. Appreciative Inquiry enables that by constantly inviting the organization to stay in a curious state and hunger for continuous improvement. Having such a mindset amid uncertainty allows focusing on incremental changes that can influence and control at the time. This control and influence are empowered by Appreciative Inquiry's one of the most prominent distinctive features: strength-based and generative probing to channel what is powerful within the organization's context. After that is defined, Appreciative Inquiry offers inclusiveness by inviting members of organizations to co-create and design ideal directions to go. This aspect of change facilitated by every member of the organization is essential for organizational development to be durable, and Appreciative Inquiry enables that naturally.

Another aspect that the findings shed light on is the more practical side regarding the implementation process of Appreciative Inquiry, which is the definition of the Affirmative Topic that the practice revolves around, followed by the 4D cycle of Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny. The findings show that the processes of Appreciative Inquiry don't need to change and the models essentially hold. However, regardless of whether it is applied during a crisis or not, the process is always modified based on the context and the needs of the group. So this is the responsibility of the facilitator to mind the group and spend enough time and put enough emphasis on whatever the context, place, people and time required. For example, in the first step that defines the Affirmative Topic, the focus, especially under crisis context, is on the acknowledgment of the circumstances as a whole without disregarding the reality of the world. In the second step, which is the Discovery, where the generative questions play a significant role in order to define what is of value to the people of the organization, the questions take a shift and have a nuance to show this acknowledgment of the complexity around the individuals. The next step, which is the Dream, also holds but it is also necessary to be able to envision futures amid the uncertainty that the crisis brings. In order to manage that, Appreciative Inquiry suggests to vision incremental changes and improvements. This allows for dreaming still big and differently, but with concrete steps. When it comes to whether the implementation process will be affected by the world converting to digital after this crisis, the vast majority of the experts in the field strongly believe that it is going to be a mix of online and face-to-face in the future because there are advantages and disadvantages to both ways. The COVID-19 crisis has been an excellent opportunity to discover which one fits better in which contexts.

Finally, the last set of findings of this study makes a link between the implementation of Appreciative Inquiry with the organizational factors of effective communication, organizational trust and organizational resilience. The results show that these factors are a part of the implementation process as they are deeply infused into the practice. Also, with this practice, these organizational factors can become outcomes of the process. For example, the social constructionist principle and storytelling exercise in the implementation process help building up organizational trust by naturally using the basics of effective communication exercises. Similarly, defining the affirmative topic

through reframing helps the organizations gain a resilient mindset that perceives disruptions as opportunities and aims to learn and grow from those opportunities.

Some critical considerations when inspecting this study is that this study only collects information from the Appreciative Inquiry practitioners' side. In order to generalize the findings, future research can try to explore insights from organizational members who have applied Appreciative Inquiry practices to manages changes during the pandemic. Another critical area of recommendation for further studies is regarding the aforementioned mix-up of virtual and in-person practices. The practitioners have a high level of confidence that this combination is going to happen. It can be the focus of the further research that for what reasons and in which practical ways can online and in-person practices be interlaced, what contexts are more suitable for online/in-person and which steps of the process are best done online/in-person. Another limitation is although this study recognizes that not every individual or organization was impacted the same ways or amounts by the COVID-19 pandemic for various reasons such as accessibility to healthcare or the internet, a majority of the organizations with access to the internet were taken as the point of origin.

Despite the limitations, the outcomes of this study contribute to the scarce literature on how Appreciative Inquiry can be a valuable tool to facilitate change management in disruptive times. On top of the academic contributions, the implications drawn out of this study serve as a guide for the Appreciative Inquiry community of practice and organizations to consult, especially when faced with a crisis.

Abstract

Keywords: Appreciative Inquiry, COVID-19, Crisis, Organizational Development, Principles of Appreciative Inquiry, 4D Cycle, Effective Communication, Organizational Trust, Organizational Resilience

The world is currently facing a pandemic, a worldwide crisis that affects everyone, as well as organizational management interventions. It is well established that Appreciative Inquiry (hereafter AI) is a successful approach and modality for organizational development (hereafter OD). Although AI has been acknowledged as a valuable tool to manage organizational change in tragedy, there is little to no information in the literature that explains how AI practices should be implemented during a crisis. This study aims to explore which features of AI are of the utmost importance and effectiveness, whether the AI implementation process needs modifications to meet the crisis situation, which organizational factors play crucial roles in facilitating the successful implementation of AI during a crisis.

To examine how AI can be of help to the organizations who are going through some transformational change during the COVID-19 crisis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 participants from the scholars and practitioners of the AI worldwide community of practice, who performed valuable work using AI during the COVID-19 pandemic and before. The answers to the interview questions were analyzed according to the grounded theory. The findings showed that AI navigates organizations perfectly through a crisis due to its opportunistic approach, inclusive nature and clarity of the process. The results add that the core processes hold for when applied during crises, but the work of the AI facilitator becomes paramount to identify and address the needs of the circumstances. It is also found that organizational trust can be established naturally by applying the AI processes for organizational development, which include effective communication practices. With these AI processes and the mindset it creates, organizations become more resilient towards disruptions.

In conclusion, the benefits and value of AI hold in times of crisis; however, this study bolds the necessary nuances of the AI practices to be brought in times of crisis, which makes the findings highly relevant for practice. This study offers implications for the AI facilitators and scholars as the deductions were created from the practitioners' inputs. The practitioners analyzed the behaviors and reactions they got from the organizational members' in their experiences and shared them in order to reduce any limitation of a possible one-sided approach.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	i
Executive Summary	iii
Abstract	vii
Introduction	1
Literature Review	3
AI & COVID-19 Pandemic	3
AI Over Traditional OD During a Crisis.....	3
AI in Complexity	4
Features of AI.....	6
Implementation Process of AI - 4D Cycle	9
Success Factors for Organizations.....	12
Organizational Factors in Crisis Management.....	13
Critique for AI in Crisis	15
Methodology	17
Theoretical Sampling	17
Data Collection & Analysis	20
Findings & Discussion	21
RQ1: Which features of Appreciative Inquiry can be particularly useful in a time of a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic?	21
RQ2: How can Appreciative Inquiry implementation processes (e.g., 4D cycle) be modified to meet the current situation of the world during a crisis, namely the COVID-19 pandemic?.....	29
RQ3: Are there any organizational factors that can facilitate the implementation of Appreciative Inquiry during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic?	36
Additional Findings	45
Conclusion	49
Limitations & Recommendations.....	52
Bibliography	55
Appendix. Interview Guide	61

List of Figures

Figure 1. Levels of Appreciative Inquiry.....	5
Figure 2. Dimensions of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).....	7
Figure 3. The organizational factors as a part and one of the outcomes of the AI process.....	13
Figure 4. Data Structure of RQ1	21
Figure 5. Data Structure of RQ2	29
Figure 6. Data Structure RQ3.....	37
Figure 7. Data Structure of Additional Findings.....	45

List of Tables

Table 1. Profiles of Participants	17
Table 2. Quotes from the Interviews for RQ1 Themes	26
Table 3. Quotes from the Interviews for RQ2 Themes	34
Table 4. Quotes from the Interviews for RQ3 Themes	41
Table 5. Quotes from the Interviews for Additional Findings' Themes	47
Table 6. Breakdown of the findings to the main research question "How can AI help organizations go through transformational changes during the COVID-19 pandemic?"	50

Introduction

"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new."

-Socrates

Crises can show themselves in various forms, as Wang (2008) states. It can result from natural disasters (hurricanes, earthquakes, fire, etc.) or from human actions such as scandals, terror attacks, product faults (Mitroff, 1988). The frequent occurrence of crises shows the need for preparing organizations and individuals for crises with effective practices (Wang, 2008). This was seen in 2020, when the organizations and economies all around the world, as well as millions of people, have been affected unalterably by the COVID-19 pandemic. The task of the organizational leaders at this point is to adapt to the new normal by managing the rattled supply chains, enabling remote workforces and at the same time keeping their motivation high, so they can keep on operating. While the organizations have to go through a transformation at this period, it is believed that Appreciative Inquiry (hereafter AI) can be of help in effective ways (Cooperrider & Fry, 2020). These effective ways, in terms of most capacity filled, are when every relevant resource and hope are combined. AI is a supportive, strengths-based approach through engaging all the stakeholders for self-determined change. AI does that by inquiring into the current situation and possible opportunities, envisioning their ideal and designing futures around that while involving every actor in the organization. Due to this inclusive nature and clarity in the process of AI, the resources inside and outside of any given system can be made available through AI (Cooperrider, 2018). As AI suggests perceiving change as an opportunity, it also means drawing learning points from the current scenarios in order for the change to be a step forward. This might seem difficult during crisis times, as Legadec (1997) points out, it requires significant effort for learning by the organizations as the environment grows in complexity and uncertainty. But that is precisely why AI shows up as a great framework and medium to handle the complexity going on in a world of a pandemic.

Although there have been numerous studies conducted for crisis management and for the topic of AI separately, this area has missing or insufficient information, which limits the ability to draw concrete conclusions on how AI can work as a support mechanism during a crisis (i.e., what features of AI to focus on, the implementation process, which organizational factors to draw strength from). Therefore, further clarification is required to make it more transparent how AI can be a helpful tool to assist organizational change in a world affected by the latest COVID-19 pandemic. The existing literature with the contribution of Cooperrider (2018) suggests that AI can be used in the core of a tragedy, a deep level of complexity. However, there is a gap to know how exactly this complex level of AI works. For example, how can organizations manage the act of appreciation and diving into the best of the past when going through a crisis, how can AI still manage to mobilize people towards a goal when they are suffering from a crisis, how to expect organizations to dream and envision their ideal scenarios amid high uncertainty brought by crisis, or how to make use out of an approach that focuses on togetherness and people coming together, in such a time of a worldwide pandemic under lockdown. There is a gap to show how the AI principles and models are still, or even more, relatable

during times of a crisis. Therefore, the goals of this study are to investigate this level of AI in times of such complexity, how it can support organizations in a worldwide crisis (such as the COVID-19 pandemic). Hence this paper analyzes the attributes of AI to see what has the utmost importance, examines whether the implementation process of AI needs any modification when faced with a crisis situation, and reports the organizational factors that possibly have roles for the facilitation of AI when practiced with a crisis. To address these gaps, the main research question that will be in mind is "How can Appreciative Inquiry (AI) help organizations go through transformational changes during the COVID-19 pandemic?" with the sub-questions:

1. Which features of Appreciative Inquiry can be particularly useful in a time of a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How can Appreciative Inquiry implementation processes (e.g., 4D cycle) be modified to meet the current situation of the world during a crisis, namely the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. Are there any organizational factors that can facilitate the implementation of Appreciative Inquiry during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic?

It is valuable to address these questions as a lot of organizations can benefit from the findings, especially with the changes they are going through with the COVID-19 pandemic, by consulting such strength-based crisis management practices. Without examining the identifying features and processes of AI, it is not possible to know which kinds of modifications are needed, if any, to be applied at disruptive times like this. Not only the organizations, the literature, as well as scholars could also benefit from seeing which aspects of AI become paramount in crises, whether the implementation processes hold or not and which organizational factors to consider as a part of the process and outcomes of it.

In order to be able to answer these questions and explore the insights with real meanings while giving sufficient freedom to express perspectives, a qualitative research method was used. The aim was to gain detailed knowledge and understandings in a descriptive way. Therefore, primary descriptive data is collected via 8 semi-structured interviews which were conducted with the scholars and practitioners in this field. All of the interviews took place on an online platform, were recorded and conducted in English. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed with the grounded theory. Each interview was transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Each transcription was coded and during the coding process, some codes were noticed to be similar in their essence, which resulted in realizing some patterns to draw conclusions.

Literature Review

AI & COVID-19 Pandemic

The recent COVID-19 pandemic is a globally extraordinary situation and it is regarded as one of the turning points in history to disarray social and economic norms in the way that we know them and therefore, provokes a new human era (Dirani et al., 2020). According to Gopinath (2020), this crisis has put the world in a great lockdown under which the global economy is suffering from the worst recession since the great depression and not only that but this crisis has also caused hundreds of fatalities and challenged the limits of health systems. As Cooperrider and Fry (2020) put it, economies all around the world, as well as millions of people, have been affected unalterably by the COVID-19 pandemic.

When it comes to managing the effects of these kinds of crisis situations and hazardous environments that leadership and organizational practices are being faced, there are some explorations by some studies on global disasters from a range of perspectives (McNulty, Luring, Jonasson, Selmer, 2019). To specifically focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, Dirani et al. (2020) point out that currently, it is not possible to know what the new normal will look like with social, economic and healthcare systems which are on the verge of collapsing; but it is in the hands of organizations and its leaders to shape the new normal. The task of the organizational leaders at this point is to adapt to the new normal by managing the rattled supply chains, enabling remote workforces and at the same time, keeping their motivation high so that they can go on operating (Cooperrider & Fry, 2020). Similarly, Raney (2014) mentions if organizations want to survive crisis situations, they must develop the necessary infrastructure that allows healthy communication, collaborative decision making and strategic planning in a flexible environment that is agile and in a growth mindset. Although it may seem like it is out of place or luxury to talk about organizational development (hereafter OD) during a major crisis like this, Cooperrider and Fry (2020) state that this is precisely what leaders and organizations should be doing if they want to survive and make the best out of this disruption by working for OD and learn from the crisis.

AI Over Traditional OD During a Crisis

Organizational development interventions took a shift within the current situation of the world, especially after this global pandemic. The classic interventions like traditional problem solving started to be quit, especially when it concerns human systems, with the postmodern approach of AI for organizations and communities. While traditional problem solving included the identification of deficiencies or problems in the system (French & Bell, 1984), AI follows a different approach of a philosophical change management method for specifically human systems (Faure, 2006). AI is a way of seeing and being and beyond a methodology (Watkins & Mohr, 2001) and more of a mindset. "More than a method or technique, the appreciative mode of inquiry is a way of living with, being

with, and directly participating in the varieties of social organization we are compelled to study.” (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, pp. 88-89). AI provides a tangible result of the inquiry process of a series of statements describing where the organization aims to be, based on the strength-based moments and experiences the members had within this organization. These findings are based on the actual experience of the people who belong to that organization. This inquiry is being made in a workshop format where participants recall these moments in their past within the organization and doing so creates an energy that is generative and synergistic. Participants generate ways of organizational improvement based on this collective effort with a positive, promising twist. This type of energy is what makes AI unique and unlike any other (Hammond, 2013). That statement is backed up by Godwin (2016) when it was said that the impact of AI had exceeded expectations in its nearly thirty-five-year-old past and thousands of global practices in communities, organizations, teams and individuals.

AI includes every individual of the organization in the change process as main actors by bringing everyone together and valuing each of their experiences. Or in other words, AI is the cooperative search for the best in people for their organizations and the world around them (Ludema, Whitney, Mohr, & Griffin, 2003). This way, the learnings from a crisis and the change itself become much more deep-rooted and sustainable. Therefore to make learning as durable as possible, the process needs to include every member of the system. This makes having an organizational development practice as inclusive and extensive as possible a crucial necessity during crises. However, according to Hamel & Zanini (2014), today’s organizations are being built and designed for discipline and efficiency by being enforced through hierarchy and routinization and never constructed to change proactively and profoundly or widely. Instead, change is seen as something that is initiated and managed top-down. AI and its inclusive nature with its principles make using this practice very convenient and therefore a proposition for organizational change, especially during a crisis. Bushe and Marshak (2009) also state that AI and similar forms of OD are used in order to encourage everyone in the organization to take a role in collective sensemaking. It is mentioned that the core of these inquiry-based methodologies is based more on generativity and co-constructionism with social interaction rather than on other traditional problem-solving. This is backed up by Bushe (2007), proposing that the wisdom of the “traditional OD” should be brought together with positive questions and generative designs to create change and make it deep-rooted.

AI in Complexity

To illustrate different levels of complexity from the AI perspectives, Cooperrider (2018) presents a pyramid-like model of AI that can be useful in crisis times, which explains three levels of AI from the least to the deepest, most straightforward to more complex ones. Figure 1 below shows this model:

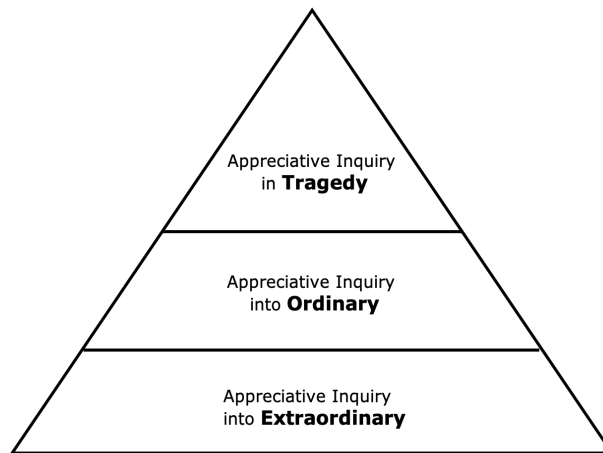


Figure 1. Levels of Appreciative Inquiry

AI into Extraordinary: The bottom level, the AI into the Extraordinary, is the most straightforward and earliest domain to practice AI. This means that it is the most superficial level regarding the activation of an appreciative eye for the extraordinarily best in human experiences.

AI into Ordinary: This level is a slightly more difficult one. When the times are regular and taken for granted that we often fail to appreciate the life-giving things, it is vital to acknowledge the capacity for recognizing those seemingly ordinary and unimportant things.

AI into Tragedy: This is the level where AI capacity is not about the moments of excellence or making meaning out of the ordinary; instead, it is AI in the core of a tragedy. Victor Frankl noted many examples of the generative power of having the choice of looking for the life-giving meaning in the middle of extraordinary circumstances. There, however, is a gap to see how exactly AI can be used in the deeper, more complex level of "AI in tragedy". This study is going to discover the practical side and the implementation process of this theory with the hope to also contribute to the existing literature.

To lean into how the practitioners and other scholars in this field are perceiving this, an example can be given of two AI practitioner/scholars, Henning & Armstrong (2020), exchanging their perspectives during the COVID-19 pandemic on how to work on sustaining resilience during these times of disruption, while striving to support people at the same time. They state that AI at the level of tragedies, with its ability to make a positive impact during these times of crisis, offers specific strategies for systems. AI, with its facilitation process and combined with several organizational factors, has the potential to lift organizations up from the pitfalls they have fallen with this latest global pandemic. This study is going to explore the depths of the implementation of AI and the organizational factors that work as a tool during these times. For aforementioned reasons, Cooperrider and Fry (2020) point out with confidence that AI possibly can reach its highest potential for leaving an impact on the organizations and human systems in the core of pandemic, crisis or tragedy.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has become more and more dependent on the technological developments that enable remote coworking. It is thought that AI holds its convenience for a proposition during crisis times since it is believed that it can easily be done via teleconferencing the same way it can be done face-to-face since the focus is the mutual collaboration and co-creation of people. Discovery, dream, design-oriented inquiry can be made with an online interactive process that can allow participants to join from anywhere in the world to an "eSummit" (Cooperrider & Fry, 2020; Whitney & Cooperrider, 2000). This incorporation of technology with AI has given its fruits and multiple examples of the usage of AI were observed in the lockdown period of 2020 with the COVID-19 crisis. Cooperrider and Fry (2020) even claim that with the COVID-19 pandemic, they are witnessing more deeply developmental OD conversations than they ever anticipated with the leaders at Progressive, Swagelok and the Cleveland Clinic. Furthermore, a study conducted by Cayré (2020) shows that a group of French Appreciative Inquiry practitioners virtually came together on a regular basis during the first eight weeks of the lockdown in March 2020. They had generative conversations about how companies could be supported with AI in these turbulent times and how to make good use of technology and digital tools in order to create coherent and meaningful proposals to organizations. This way, they co-created a strong sense of togetherness. The spirit of AI instantly infused into the meetings and supported the participants not just to handle the situation but also to envision and realize projects together. This became a unique experience of appreciative, collective and digital resilience. Another study tackled by Cruz Teller and Ogawa (2020) has shown the process and critical insights of a social justice organization's AI into their resilience and the needs of the community members that were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. They followed an Appreciative Leadership Lotus (ALL) model and also the AI principles with online gatherings. It was seen in these gatherings that a group of diverse people, through sharing their stories, found the much-needed hope in these times of despair and crisis. AI once again was perfectly positioned to help people to move through hope and despair not alone but virtually together in times of physical distancing.

Features of AI

This part focuses deeper on AI to examine which features can be stressed the most for crisis management. To establish a more profound understanding, looking at the beginning of AI, it can be traced back to the 1980s when a study was conducted by David Cooperrider during his internship in cooperation with the Cleveland Clinic. Although his research collected data on problems and issues, with the guidance of Suresh Srivastva, the focus leaned on what gave life and endurance to the organization, the nature of inquiry and generativity of the organizations with the power of questions. This was the birth of appreciative inquiry (Bushe, 2012a) and a very brief summary of what AI is. Grieten, Lambrechts, Bouwen, Huybrechts, Fry and Cooperrider (2017) state, when David Cooperrider and Ron Fry were considering the intervention effect of inquiry on a bigger scale, they came to the realization that AI can be planned and used consciously as a way of working with people and organizations because as Finegold et al. (2002) state, the destiny of organizations are interlaced with human knowledge as the knowledge has a direct effect on the actions. This inquiry is an intervention since the questions determine what can be found within an individual or an organization and change begins immediately with that. After the generative questions, AI aims to generate

conversations that bring out the “essential goodness” of the system to mediate improvement, rather than seeking to find the “right” answers and that is why the words are essential. It is demonstrated by many applications of AI in various settings that the more generative the inquiry is, the more it endures since inquiring into high moments and best experiences bring people together. Especially in the middle of a worldwide disaster, collective imagination and conversations about the future are the most excellent resources for generating constructive organizational change. Anticipatory view of organizational life hypothesizes an image of the future and this gives a guiding force in organizational life. When thinking of the crisis management aspect, during such times, organizations are in need of such a guiding force the most.

Hall & Hammond (1998) summarizes AI and its assumptions that the theory is based on in the following way:

- What we give attention to, what we focus on, becomes reality
- The act of asking questions influences the group/organization in some ways
- If we bring the past experiences to the future, they should be the ones that are the best of value in the past
- The words we use create worlds and reality

Or to put it in a framework to make it more systematic to examine later on in this study, as seen below in Figure 2, AI has four dimensions (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

-AI is scientific/theoretical and therefore seeks knowledge with grounded observation and **best of “what is”**

-AI is metaphysical and seeks appreciative knowledge by visionary logic and with the **ideals of “what might be”**

-AI is normative and looks for practical knowledge by **collaborative** dialogue and choices with the consent of **“what should be”**

-AI is pragmatic and seeks knowledgeable action by collective **experimentation** and through experiencing **“what can be”**



Figure 2. Dimensions of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987)

As Bushe stated (2012b), inquiry into the potential of a system should begin with appreciation, be collaborative, provocative and applicable. These principles and dimensions are relevant to this research in order to investigate which of these features of AI have the utmost significance and whether they should be altered while implementing in a crisis situation. To examine that, this paper first digs deeper into their meanings. Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) explain these features of AI in the following way:

Feature 1: Should begin with appreciation

This suggests that the initial task of research is to discover, describe and explain social innovations, in other words, what gives “life” and value to the system and activates the members. The appreciative approach brings along inspiration of the current state and looks for a comprehensive understanding and supports the organization to heighten its potential. Bushe and Kassam (2005) also state that AI focuses on the examples of the system when it is at its best with the highest aspirations rather than the problems that need solving. This is a principle that can be challenging to keep when the times are attracting negative attention caused by the disaster. However, this principle shouldn’t be overlooked as it consists of the core of the intervention.

Feature 2: Should be applicable

In order for applied science of administration to be significant in a human sense, the theoretical knowledge should be able to be used, applied and validated in action. It should have strong relevance to the everyday language and not be stuck only in academic circles. Bushe & Kassam (2005) put forward that the outcomes of AI are only helpful if they are applied in the system in which AI takes place. This principle is fundamental during the COVID-19 pandemic the world is facing, considering many norms are no longer valid but instead, the world is adapting to a new normal. The outcomes of AI, when it comes to the implementation process, might be challenging. This study aims to question how this implementation process is getting affected and whether applicability is an issue.

Feature 3: Should be provocative

It is considered that an organization is a system that is able to improve and to learn how to take part in its own development actively. Therefore, to generate images of practical developmental opportunities, appreciative knowledge can be used and also be experimented with on a broader scale. It becomes provocative in the sense that the abstracted findings of a study encourage systematic, down-to-earth applications. Thus, AI can be both pragmatic and visionary. According to Bushe & Kassam (2005), this principle means that AI should create knowledge, images and models to urge the members of the system to take action. It is essential in such a global crisis as COVID-19 to provoke members of a system and to show them that a change and intervention can be made possible even with physical distancing.

Feature 4: Should be collaborative

This tackles the inclusive nature of AI. There is an inseparable relationship between the method of inquiry and its content. Therefore, a collaborative relationship between the organization and the

researcher is necessary. As Bushe & Kassam (2005) also state, the system individuals should be involved in the design and execution of AI. Data that are practical, applicable, loaded with provocative possibilities can be generated collaboratively by hearing the multiple perspectives in the community. Generativity occurs when people collaboratively discover and create things that they can use to benefit in the future. AI is generative in numerous ways. Every AI activity should be built with generativity: starting with generative questions, opening generative conversations and resulting in generative action. These generative questions should cause people to reflect and think, should touch people's hearts and spirits that matter to them. What is more, answering and listening to the answers to these questions will bring people together. The power of the questions is that they push us to look at reality a bit differently in the way the questions are being asked. Therefore sometimes, reality can be reframed with answering a question (Bushe, 2007). During times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, this aspect of AI might be a challenge for some organizations, especially for those who lack technological tools to bring their members together to generate meaning together. This research also aims to investigate how organizations are overcoming this obstacle and whether they are modifying the application process of AI in order to overcome this.

As a summary of the principles of AI, the following was put together (Clouder & King, 2015):

- **The constructionist principle:** the reality is socially constructed through interaction. The understandings of future possibilities are generated by the action of inquiry;
- **The principle of simultaneity:** Change and inquiry co-occur; they go hand in hand. Change begins at the inception of inquiry and continues with the questions asked;
- **The poetic principle:** what we choose to focus on affects what we discover. The past, present and future are open to interpretation just like a poem being open for endless different interpretations;
- **The anticipatory principle:** images of the future that are collectively imagined affect current behaviors;
- **The positive principle:** positive thinking is required to give change momentum.

Each principle might have a different weight in importance, relevancy and difficulty during crises. These differences are going to be investigated.

Implementation Process of AI - 4D Cycle

As this study questions how AI implementation processes can be modified to meet the current situation of the world after the COVID-19 pandemic, this part tackles those processes to develop a better understanding with a crisis perspective afterward. As Verleysen, Lambrechts and Van Acker (2014) put, there is not a single best way to perform AI. Although there is no single accepted general model for AI, the 4D cycle presented by Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) builds a good basis and is

used widely for the AI practice (Clouder & King, 2015). This best-known method of AI includes four sets: discovery, dream, design and destiny (Stavros, Cooperrider & Kelly, 2003). These sets evolve around the affirmative topic chosen. Defining the affirmative topic is the 5th "D" and therefore this model is sometimes named as 5D cycle too.

For a brief review of other methods or modifications to this, another model by De Witt et al. (2020) also suggests a new beginning phase to the 4D cycle called "Dawn." This phase is about building and maintaining trusting relationships by finding and creating a common ground. Dawn phase plays a supporting role for AI initiatives by allowing realistic timelines. Another framework that is used primarily in strategic planning, which is a strategic inquiry with an appreciative intent: the SOAR model. In the SOAR model, the classic SWOT model's Weakness & Threats part is transformed into Aspirations & Results to see what is the preferred future and the measurable results (Stavros, Cooperrider & Kelly, 2003). Another model that is very relevant at times like this is the ALIVE model, which is a reflective practice for challenging times, especially for educators and has five parts which are Appreciate, Love, Inquire, Venture, Evolve (Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012).

Below, the steps of the 4D cycle are explained with their relevance to crisis times.

Affirmative Topic

Even when applied under crisis scenarios, it is expected for the AI practice to still revolve around an affirmative topic. In fact, the choice of an affirmative topic could gain more importance once AI is practiced during and after a crisis. Cooperrider (1990) explains what the mentalist paradigm suggests that mind and matter are no longer the opposite. This means that throughout the years and from various perspectives, it has been considered that the imagery is a very influential agent in the guidance and determination of the action. It can be stated that every organization, product, or innovative service first started with imagery. The power of positive imagery is a crucial factor in every action and not only a popular illusion. Also, according to Hall & Hammond (1998), social forms emerge towards positive and life-giving images. In addition to this made by Egan & Lancaster (2005) is that groups, organizations or communities have some images of themselves and this regulates their self-organizing processes. There are several areas of research for this, namely placebo, Pygmalion, metacognitive competence, etc. Therefore, this is the reason why AI posits that an attentive amplification of positive imagery is the core of the process.

Whitney and Cooperrider (2000) believe that the choice of the affirmative topic is the core of AI as it is the most crucial part of any AI undertaking and that the very first questions which are asked contain the seeds of change. According to Bushe (2007), people who have an appreciative mindset tend to look for what they want more of instead of what is missing and therefore pay attention to the "positive core" of the system. Although it is beneficial, the purpose of AI is not to focus on the positive; it is to generate an improved future. So AI is more about the generative and not the positive (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). This step is also named "Define" as it is the definition of the overall focus of the inquiry, what the system wants more of (The Champlain College David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry, n.d.). This step of AI might seem difficult during crisis times

especially considering the critique aforementioned regarding “positivity.” This study is going to examine the choice of the affirmative topic and whether the crisis had any effect on this process.

Discovery

In this phase, people are engaged in the discovery of past experiences to understand the energy-giving factors of success (Verleysen et al., 2014) and what is valued. The spark of the “spirit of inquiry” is being lit up through the interview process (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). Positive questions are being asked around the positive core and through sharing and valuing the past experiences, people come together and the community expands (Verleysen et al., 2014; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999).

According to Whitney and Cooperrider (2000), some activities in this step include:

- Positive core mapping (the positive principle)
- Appreciative interviews
- Recollection of past experiences (Feature 1)

It is going to be examined whether this step needs any modification for when AI is practiced during/after a crisis and if so, what types of changes are required.

Dream

This phase is where people envision and contemplate new possibilities about the commonly preferred future (Verleysen et al., 2014). As Cooperrider & Whitney (1999) put it, an artist’s imagination and creativity are not inflamed by looking for “what is wrong with this picture” but getting inspired by those things worth valuing and appreciating. This is a metaphor to explain in this step, and the goal is to make what keeps the organization “alive” visible to everyone.

According to Whitney and Cooperrider (2000), some activities in this step include:

- Sharing the dreams (Feature 4)
- Discussions around the dreams (the poetic principle)

This study is going to seek answers to whether the Dream phase shows any difference when AI is practiced under crisis conditions and whether the unfavorable circumstances have any effect on the dream phase.

Design

After the previous steps of discovery and dream, in the design phase, attention turns to creating the ideal organization. As Cooperrider and Godwin (2011) put it, organizations are there to serve a life-enriching purpose and to accomplish things individual sets of strengths cannot accomplish alone. Therefore the outcomes of the individual interviews are used to collectively craft bridges the best of “what is” with the “what might be.” In this step, people challenge the status quo together as well as the generic assumptions regarding the organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). Co-constructing

the future and creating positive institutions that heighten the human strengths by connecting individuals, resulting in more co-created wisdom, is the vision of this step.

According to Whitney and Cooperrider (2000), some activities in this step include:

- Co-creation of the architecture of the organization (the constructionist principle)
- Prototyping
- Crafting provocative propositions (Feature 3)

This phase has the potential to be one of the most challenging ones for the AI practice for crisis management. It can be challenging both in the sense that the hostile environment caused by the disaster might influence the motivation of individuals to strive for an ideal future and also that the uncertainty of the world during and after the crisis might limit the design process. One of the goals of this study is to assess whether this is true and explore ways of how to control it.

Destiny

In the latest phase, the self-organization of the people is seen in order to set up plans and projects to realize this imagined, preferred future (Verleysen et al., 2014). This is an invitation for action where self-selected groups plan the next steps based on the inspiration gained in previous steps (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999).

According to Whitney and Cooperrider (2000), some activities in this step include:

- Generating possible future actions (the constructionist & anticipatory principles)
- Declaration of specific support or cooperation needs (Feature 2)

Similar to the Design phase, this phase is also likely to get affected by the uncertainty of the crisis. What can be done is to prepare the organization in ways to handle this uncertainty and take actions accordingly. This study is going to explore such ways.

Success Factors for Organizations

Cooperrider (2012) states that there are several factors for AI to be successful in organizations. These success factors are to be questioned to see if they are still valid from the angle of a crisis and whether there should be more factors to be added to this set or if there are any to be removed.

1. **Reversing the 80/20 Rule:** Reversing the deficit bias and preparing the leadership team with the strengths-based mindset (e.g., Admiral Vernon Clark, The Navy's CNO)
2. **A purpose bigger than the system:** Regardless of the times being good or crisis, the goal is to bring out the best in human systems and therefore, one success factor is the creative work of AI for the articulation of the task of the inquiry
3. **Wholeness quality of the configurations:** It is not about the strengths one (organization) possesses; it is about the discovery of how the wholeness experience brings out the best. Therefore, it is not about the numbers of people but completeness.

4. **Creation of a system where it is possible for innovation to emerge from everywhere:** The skills of “design thinking” have high importance for the collaborative spirit of AI. The power of empathy, story, iteration and teamwork is gaining control also from the eyes of the companies (e.g., Apple, Procter & Gamble).
5. **Turning the strengths revolution into an advantage for growth:** An organization needs to have a growth mindset in order to create a culture of open innovation. (e.g., the UN Global Compact in 2004 chose the method of AI to build a growth strategy for their world summit with the attendance of corporations such as Alcoa, Royal Dutch Shell, Goldman Sachs, Novartis, Coca-Cola and Microsoft in the General Assembly as well as the leaders of international NGOs like Oxfam and the World Wildlife Fund - the goal was achieved.)

This study aims to seek if these success conditions remain or if more (or different) requirements need to be added to this set when it comes to AI facilitation in a crisis.

Organizational Factors in Crisis Management

This part aims, specifically, to explore organizational factors that may facilitate the implementation of AI during a crisis. Below there are some relevant factors extracted from crisis management literature that has the potential to have an essential role during such disruptive times. These factors are later on going to be examined about how to establish them, their relevancy and whether they facilitate the AI implementation process during the pandemic by being a part of the process. Figure 3 below illustrates this relationship.

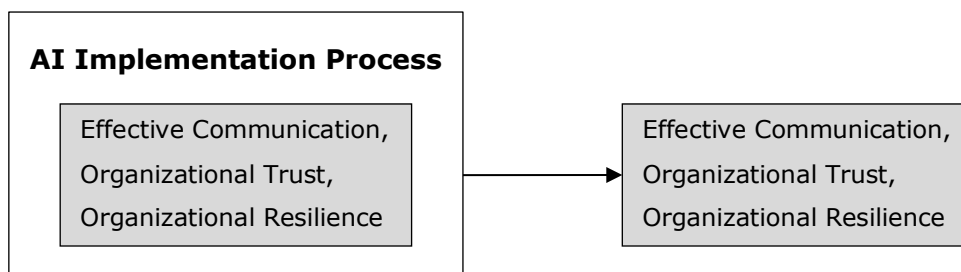


Figure 3. The organizational factors as a part and one of the outcomes of the AI process

Effective Communication

According to Fielding (2006), effective communication is essential for all organizations to survive. He points out that according to communication experts, there is no one definition of effective communication as it varies from different situations, but effective communication for organizations can be defined as a transaction where the participants create meaning collaboratively by exchanging verbal, non-verbal and graphic sources. Fielding stresses the fact that effective communication demands people to work together to make sure that the meaning created together is the same for everyone, which is a lot correlated with the constructionist principle of AI and its collective nature.

Carrol and Hatakenaka (2001) tackle the importance of communication as a factor that affects and assists organizations when faced with a crisis. In the case study that they present, one significant outcome they notice is that undertaking timely communication in the sense that giving a voice to everyone is a key to minimize the effects of a crisis. Similar to that, Sanders, Nguyen, Bouckenooghe, Rafferty and Schwarz (2020) also point out the importance of the communication factor during crisis times, especially for the people with an influential role within the organization in order to create an environment where everybody feels secure to share necessary information.

Organizational Trust

In order to expect collaboration and co-creation from the individuals, some level of organizational trust is necessary. According to Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis & Winograd (2000), organizational trust is the expectations the individuals build over the networks of organizational relationships and behaviors. Individuals within an organization concurrently form perceptions of personal and organizational trust. Therefore trust within an organization can be experienced differently by the individuals due to their different networks and backgrounds. A unified trust process can be established with communication being put in the center. Accurate information, explanations for decisions and openness as communication factors are affecting the perception of trust within the organization. Carrol and Hatakenaka (2001) point out that this organizational trust which is constructed within an organization backed up by effective communication factors, is another organizational factor that plays a crucial role in facilitating processes. Organizational trust enables an organization to establish an open environment which makes the climate in the organization fruitful for improvement. According to Suprapti, Asbari, Cahyono and Mufid (2020), the organizational climate plays a vital role in gaining competitive advantage during crisis times as it supports the organizations to remember the core goals and motivate them to work together towards those goals. As Carrol and Hatakenaka (2001) put, if there is mutual trust between the upper management and the employees, with the presence of supportive structures within the organization, it is possible to bring multiple perspectives together to build a learning environment which is the primary goal of AI.

Organizational Resilience

As Annarelli & Nonino (2016) put, organizational resilience is the capability to resist and respond flexibly to disruptive events such as shocks or disasters that affect the organizations or a system internally or externally and to recover from it, or in other words, to successfully bounce back from it in terms of coming back to the original state or to a new desired state. This new desired state has been called "the new normal" in the COVID-19 pandemic terminology and corporate culture and values can be extended into an enhanced "new normal" by the developmental activities of gaining resilience (Cooperrider & Fry, 2020). Resilience acknowledges that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to handle and face organizational challenges and that it is based on the assumption that not every crisis is identical, but different situations need to be addressed with different sets of responses which is organizational resilience (Dirani et al., 2020). That is why Caminiti (2020) explains that the function of embedding such flexibility in the culture of the organization is that it enables a better understanding of the core issues of employees and, eventually, reacts efficiently to the challenges by taking appropriate strategic standpoints.

Critique for AI in Crisis

AI is receiving some criticism and concern like all approaches do (Grieten et al., 2017). This was the case even before the COVID-19 pandemic, which sourced from the confusion between the “positivity” aspect (especially in the affirmative topic) and generativity. The “positivity” focus in organizational life was a common concern because it possibly can discourage participants from discovering “negative” organizational experiences when it might be helpful to discover that to support the change process. Labeling experiences as positive or negative can also be dangerous because, as Oliver (2005) explains, what is positive for some may be negative for others and this might come in the way of discovering what is valued in an organization. Furthermore, the narrow interpretation of appreciation as it entirely “being positive” has been challenged by Barge & Oliver (2003), stating that appreciation is connecting what people find essential in the present moment in a life-generating way.

Now that AI is being considered to be applied with a crisis situation faced, another possible area that can receive critique is the difficulty in perceiving affirmative topics and generative questions despite the hostile and hopeless environment during such a disaster/crisis. Another difficulty could be on the AI facilitators’ side, to keep themselves motivated despite the situation. This study also aims to find answers to how to keep the motivation high both from the participants’ and facilitators’ perspectives.

Methodology

In order to serve the purpose of this research and to discover answers to the research questions, qualitative methodology with the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used. Belgrave & Seide (2019) consider the method of grounded theory a solid approach to generate theory using qualitative data inductively and since its discovery, it has been the most commonly used method in qualitative research. In this methodology, since the inception of the research process, the researcher codes the data, compares, and identifies analytic leads to develop further data collection and therefore, it starts with concrete data and ends with constructing an explanatory theory (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2007). Some key assumptions of the grounded theory suggest that individuals actively create their reality and are sense makers. They do that by interpreting things from a perspective formed by their past life experiences and present social context (Murphy, Huybrechts & Lambrechts, 2019). Therefore, in order to give voice to different interpretations and perspectives to the research area of this study, interviews were conducted with AI practitioners and scholars. The following sections show the theoretical sampling and the collection of data as well as the analysis of it, as these are the essential components of grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Theoretical Sampling

For this study, targeted interviewees were mainly from the practitioners and scholars who wrote about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. An original sample of 6 participants was selected; this was extended to 8 participants with snowball sampling. The need for fewer or more participants was assessed during the research, based on whether the theoretical saturation was reached or not (Murphy, Huybrechts & Lambrechts, 2019). This was checked through an iterative process as Suddaby (2006) states, grounded theory has no finite borders between data collection and analysis. He also adds that if there is a repetition of information or confirmation of existing concepts, it signals the reach for theoretical saturation. Therefore, no number of participants was predetermined, but the theoretical saturation was examined. Table 1 below shows the profiles of participants.

Table 1. Profiles of Participants

Participant 1 (P1)	Jeanie Cockell: She is the co-president of Cockell McArthur-Blair Consulting, who specializes in designing strategies from the wisdom of individuals and organizations. She is a co-author of <i>Building Resilience with Appreciative Inquiry: A Leadership Journey through Hope, Despair, and Forgiveness</i> (2018), <i>Appreciative Inquiry in Higher Education: A Transformative Force</i> (2nd ed., 2020) and a lot of articles on leadership and AI. She has been working in the field for over 22 years as an educational and organizational consultant in the areas of resilience, AI, team building, leadership, diversity. She is also a certified Appreciative Inquiry Facilitator trainer for the Center for Appreciative Inquiry and
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	<p>a member of the Council of Practitioners for the David Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry (Cockell McArthur-Blair Consulting, n.d.-a; The Taos Institute, n.d.-b). She is also one of the editors of the November 2020 and February 2021 issues of the International Journal of AI, <i>AI Practitioner</i>.</p>
<p>Participant 2 (P2)</p>	<p>Joan McArthur-Blair: She is the co-president of Cockell McArthur-Blair Consulting, who specializes in designing strategies from the wisdom of individuals and organizations. After more than 25 years of institutional experience as an educator, her work now is around consulting, writing, speaking and facilitating groups around making positive differences. Her work is around enabling generative possibilities, using AI for leadership development, strategic planning and innovative strategies for OD. She has various experiences in academia as well as consultancy. She is a co-author of <i>Building Resilience with Appreciative Inquiry: A Leadership Journey through Hope, Despair, and Forgiveness</i> (2018), <i>Appreciative Inquiry in Higher Education: A Transformative Force</i> (2nd ed., 2020) and a lot of articles on leadership and AI (Cockell McArthur-Blair Consulting, n.d.-b; The Taos Institute, n.d.-c). She is also one of the editors of the November 2020 and February 2021 issues of the International Journal of AI, <i>AI Practitioner</i>.</p>
<p>Participant 3 (P3)</p>	<p>Luc Verheijen: Luc Verheijen is a partner at Kessels & Smit, the Learning Company and a Taos Institute Associate. His experience over 20 years has three focal points: strength-based development, working in large groups and developing leaders. He is a co-publisher of the International Journal of AI, <i>AI Practitioner</i> and one of the editors of the February 2020 issue of the journal. He also co-authored the book <i>Appreciative Inquiry as a Daily Leadership Practice</i> (2020). He has a lot of valuable experience from consultancy to teaching from corporate settings to governmental bodies and educational institutes. He is a faculty member of CIGO program at the universities of Hasselt and Leuven, Belgium (Kessels & Smit, n.d.; The Taos Institute, n.d.-d).</p>
<p>Participant 4 (P4)</p>	<p>(Anonymous) She has a career in higher education in different countries and has served in various roles from professor to president, vice-president for nearly 25 years. She has lots of experience from academia in higher education graduate programs to practice around DEI, inclusivity of students, women in leadership, employee wellness and collaborative teams. She is the Director of Community College Leadership Collaborative & Professor of Practice and a consults internationally as a CEO of a collaborative.</p>
<p>Participant 5 (P5)</p>	<p>Lindsey Godwin: She is the Robert P. Stiller Chair and Professor of Management, the Academic Director of the Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry at Champlain College and co-publisher of <i>AI Practitioner</i>. She has a lot of experience both as a scholar and as a practitioner for over 15 years in the field</p>

	<p>of AI, Emotional Intelligence, Experiential Learning theory and Organizational Behavior. She has led lots of AI summits across the world, served as chair and global advisor for lots of World AI Conferences, designed and taught AI certification programs, and helped advance the "AI Commons" and the International Journal of AI, <i>AI Practitioner</i> (Champlain College, n.d.; IPPA World Congress, n.d.; <i>Lindsey Godwin</i>, n.d.).</p>
<p>Participant 6 (P6)</p>	<p>(Anonymous) Her experience of over a decade in this field revolves around designing and implementing adult learning. She works in strategic planning and DEI with diverse public, private and civil society sectors as well as academia, using AI. She holds space using AI and DEI for building individual agency for collective and systemic social change. She has worked with several NGOs, private sector and even governmental bodies. At the heart of her work is relational leadership and social connectedness. She practices youth development practitioners in entrepreneurship, mentorship, education design and many more.</p>
<p>Participant 7 (P7)</p>	<p>Tanya Cruz Teller: She has over 20 years of experience in the OD and DEI fields. Her work specializes in blended online engagements that maximize inclusion and innovation. One of her most significant DEI work is applying AI using a context appropriate and relational lens that encourages inclusion and innovation, which is the Appreciative Leadership Lotus Model. She co-authored <i>Thriving Women, Thriving World: An Invitation to Dialogue, Healing and Inspired Actions</i> (2019); and wrote <i>the Inclusive Leadership: Transforming Diverse Lives, Organizations, and Societies</i> chapter in the book "<i>Inspiring Inclusion Using the Appreciative Leadership Lotus Model</i>" (2020). She has a lot of experience in coaching, leadership and diversity think tanks, presented and co-keynoted in many conferences and forums in the field of AI (The Center For Appreciative Inquiry, n.d.-b; The Taos Institute, n.d.-f).</p>
<p>Participant 8 (P8)</p>	<p>Cheri Torres: Over her more than 20 years of experience, she specializes in leadership, team development and system strategic planning. She combines AI and other strength-based conversations to strengthen relationships, expand possibilities, and increase productivity and engagement by AI practices and support of positive psychology and neurophysiology. She has worked with numerous leaders and teams around the world, across all sectors: corporate, government, NGOs, etc. She has trained thousands of trainers and teachers in the use of AI. She is currently a founder or associate with Innovation Partners International, Insight Shift, the Taos Institute, the Center for Appreciative Inquiry, and UniteWNC (Conversations Worth Having, n.d.; The Center For Appreciative Inquiry, n.d.-a; The Taos Institute, n.d.-a). She has authored numerous books and articles, including <i>The Appreciative Facilitator: Accelerated Learning Practices</i> (2001), <i>Dynamic Relationships: Unleashing the Power of</i></p>

	<i>Appreciative Inquiry in Daily Living</i> (2005) and <i>Conversations Worth Having</i> (2018).
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The 8 different participants of scholars and practitioners range in 4 different base countries, various areas of expertise and work experiences with different organizations.

Data Collection & Analysis

Data for this study were collected from 8 different participants by in-depth qualitative interviews. Data were collected from February to April 2021. The semi-structured interview method was chosen in order to be flexible to an extent while maintaining the research guidelines. All of the interviews were conducted on an online platform and in English (native language for a significant majority of them). The general interview protocol can be found in the Appendix; however, some questions were added or changed for some interviewees to inquire about their field of expertise in relation to this study. In addition to that, since the semi-structured interview method was followed, some additional questions or modifications were made during the interview. The average interview took 1 hour 15 minutes, the shortest took 1 hour and the longest took 2 hours. Each interview was transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Each transcription was coded and during the coding process, some codes were noticed to be similar in their essence, which resulted in realizing some patterns for a conceptual framework.

Findings & Discussion

In this part, the findings from the interview data are presented in the order of the research questions (RQs).

RQ1: Which features of Appreciative Inquiry can be particularly useful in a time of a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic?

This part focuses on the data collected that shows the aspects such as the links between the effects of the crisis with the AI features and principles, appreciation practice during AI and whether it is affected by the crisis, which one of the features of AI that enables people to have an opportunistic point of view towards the crisis and therefore mobilize them, how the principles of AI is correlated with learning from the crisis and lastly, whether the approach of AI sheds light on other issues amplified by the crisis.

Figure 4 below illustrates the data structure (inspired by Murphy, Huybrechts & Lambrechts, 2019) and presents the patterns that were seen in the raw data (first order categories) and the general patterns and themes that have emerged from them (second order themes), together with a link to the literature. Afterwards, the findings are presented in more details for each themes and categories.

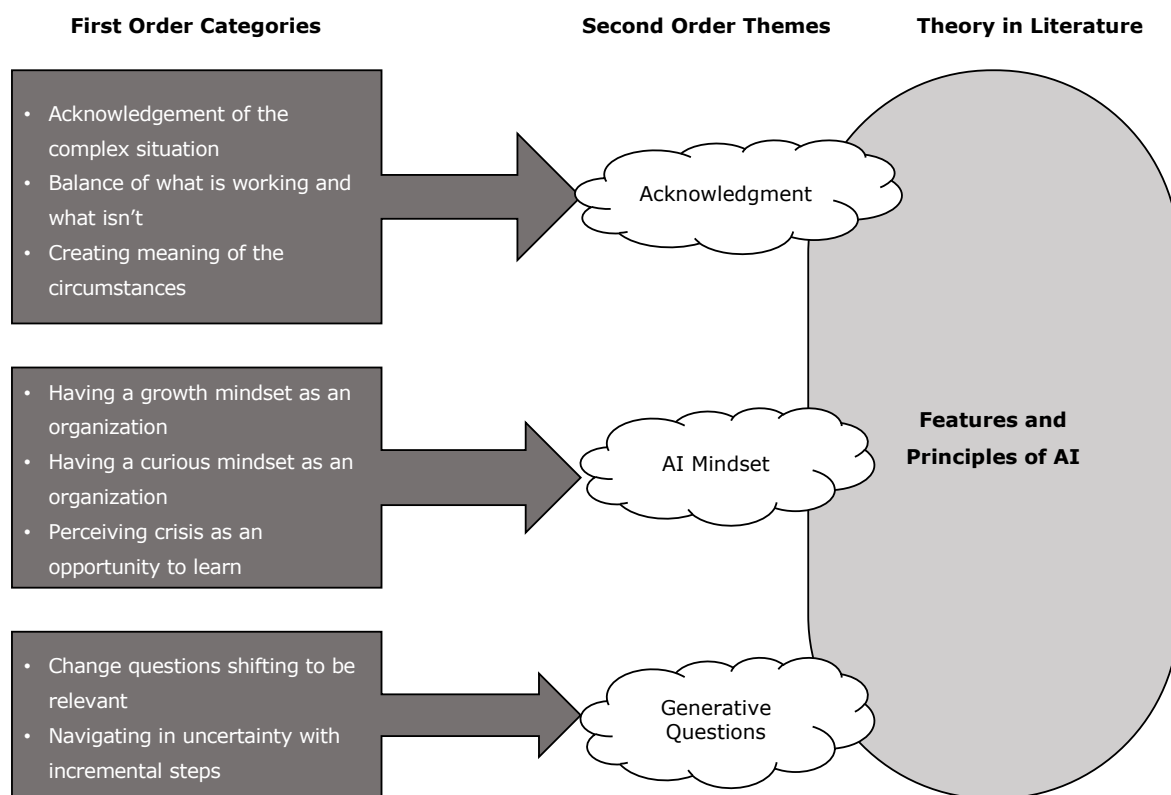


Figure 4. Data Structure of RQ1

Acknowledgement

To start with the effects of the crisis on OD processes, it was seen that the COVID-19 pandemic has an impact on all elements of life, individuals as well as organizational development interventions. It has definitely forced all to shift from what is known and asked to be resilient. However, some organizations don't believe that this is a good moment to have an organizational development process, while on the other hand, some can't wait anymore either because they can't afford to wait or change is too urgent and relevant that they see no reason to wait despite a crisis. In either case, it is observed that this crisis created an added pressure showing both where the weak parts of organizations but also light to shine, a huge opportunity to create new things as we did in the past.

To address how AI can be helpful to start with, the interviewees put an emphasis on the notion of taking a pause and inquiring what is going on in the world at the moment, appreciate it and learn from it. The experts that were interviewed give the definition of appreciation as being fully aware. Participant 3 specifically strips from the definition of appreciation "bringing out only the best experiences." Especially during a crisis, if only the best experiences are being asked from people to share those high moments, it will not resonate. In times like this, it might be more challenging to look around with appreciative eyes and it can be exhausting to find resilience. And when this work in the current context of the world translates into **being aware of all the complexity**: the pandemic, the economic crises, racism, etc. But Participant 5 finds this work of looking around with appreciative eyes to be more important than ever. As aforementioned, the first part of the meaning of appreciation that is used is to be fully aware and to acknowledge, while the second part of it is to **give meaning in the context**, to understand what is valued or to add more value, as Participant 8 defines. Participant 7 addresses that by saying that honoring the trauma should come before the process begins. Later on, as she saw in her own work around Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) together with Participant 6 and also the work of critical AI done by her colleagues' Participant 1 & 2 is that it is essential to find **a healthy balance of inquiring into "what is working and what is not**. So it is the appreciation of what is and then building on it to grow by adding more value. Thus, if the topic and the interviews are not set in this manner, people are not going to be able to engage.

AI Mindset

Participant 2 quotes David Cooperrider, "In times of tragedy the power of narrative is amplified, not diminished." Since neuroscientifically what we focus on grows, as one begins to tell a story, they start to feel differently and that is the possibility of them creating something new. So it is possible, even at this time, to look at the world not with rose-colored glasses but with appreciative eyes; all it requires is intentionality. Participant 8 phrases this intentionality as "**discovering the opportunities, what new has surfaced because of Covid** and it wasn't there before, what did we discover and what new innovations are occurring" way of approaching. And this opportunity-focused way of approach is how one mobilizes people in a crisis.

Furthermore, Participant 4 and Participant 6 draw attention to the simultaneity principle of AI. The simultaneity of it is what forced us to think about how to manage this situation; although there were predictions about pandemics and viruses, nobody on earth knew how to navigate. Simultaneously

when this crisis was emerging, Participant 6 points out that different kinds of responses from world leaders also appeared to handle this uncertainty and how they communicate things. Participant 8 drills into this by giving the conditions that if one has a fixed mindset and faces such ambiguities with that mindset, they will freeze. On the other hand, **with a growth and curious mindset**, the whole world can open up and keep growing collectively. This also is a lot connected with what Participant 5 draws attention to the wholeness principle, in the sense that it is not about one person/leader coming up with the answer to the uncertainty questions; it really is about individuals being involved in the process. It is true that people want predictability, but Participant 5 thinks that people creating answers together does help with their sense of wanting certainty. And this co-creation, this wholeness, can't be obtained without people being heard. So Participant 3 points out that if people don't first feel acknowledged about their situation, they can't get into this provocative position. This is a responsibility of the leaders as well, as Participant 6 draws attention to it and how they should encourage their people with the importance of their relationship and inclusion. This is backed up by Participant 2, who puts a big emphasis on the personal agency that revolves around "what is it that an individual contributes, what are the individual gifts" or, in other words, making AI personal. This is backed up by Participant 7 when she talks about how investment and involvement of an individual are 100% different when there is co-creation of the solution.

What makes AI particularly useful in a time of a crisis is the mindset it carries. Participant 1 believes that AI is a way of living, a way of seeing things, not just the application of the 4D model; it represents the notion of being curious about what is working out, what is really important and what end results are wanted. This curious mindset is pointed out as necessary by Participant 5, especially in times of crisis, not as a new principle per se, but it is the **steadfast intentionality to stay in a mode of inquiry** is what is essential. She says the more important word of Appreciative Inquiry is inquiry and staying in the curious space of recognizing, riding the wave, which all takes intention. Similar to it, Participant 6 also emphasizes intentionality and that it is a matter of choice how to show up in the world. She says curiosity and opening up to the outside world are the prominent aspects of AI. After establishing **the curious mindset** comes the designing how to get to the goal but also re-designing it on the way because things are constantly changing. And because of that, learning is a continuous process. Participant 1 puts it, "Good organizational development is to continue to learn and grow as a team in an organization.". This suggests that the organizations can't go on what they knew before and have to adapt. It is essential to learn from the crises in order to understand how to pivot. An example given by Participant 4, an organization in the U.S. that experienced Hurricane Florence in 2018, which was a massive disruption, started learning how to pivot at that time by intentionally focusing on the things that they valued. They believe that this experience brought clear direction and vision for how they can move in other crises, which is why they managed to navigate themselves through the COVID-19 pandemic rather smoothly. While on the other hand, Participant 4 gives the example of the Spanish Flu in 1918, where humankind could have gotten valuable lessons from, but they were not brought to our day. So the question should become how to **bring forward the lessons learned into the future** so the next time the response is better.

Another aspect that AI sheds light on during times of crisis is the issues around DEI. Participants 1, 2 and 8 mention the inequalities and the issues around race, power and privilege being amplified by the crises. They believe that the notion of critical AI brings the issues of diversity, equity and inclusion into the process powerfully and that adds tremendous value to relationships. But it is crucial, Participant 7 emphasizes, to do trauma-informed work and to create space for the pain points. This means that enough time and energy should be spent around the traumas and the pains people had around these issues to appreciate them and build healthy connections through empathy. All of the participants believe that this inclusive nature of AI and sense of belonging becomes more important. With that, the world is evolving much more of a connected community, especially the community of AI practitioners and scholars, as the individuals there see **this as an opportunity to reflect**. Participant 4 points out that AI is meant to be open for everybody to explore, experiment and develop. Therefore, the current circumstances create an excellent opportunity for the community of practice of AI to exchange ideas on this.

Generative Questions

Mobilizing people in a crisis might be difficult, but with the nature and features of AI, it is attainable. All of the participants mention that ignoring the current drawbacks are obstacles in mobilizing people. The key that the participants all mention is to see the crisis as an opportunity and not only something that hinders or immobilizes our human systems. There are multiple perspectives that the participants gave in how this opportunistic point of view can be achieved. Participant 5 says that an ideal organization is a bunch of micros filled up and she, therefore, points out the small changes one can control which are easier to provoke and motivate individuals, instead of “what is the ideal organization” using “what is the ideal best next step forward.” This is especially true when there is so much stress going on right now since people cannot see the other side of the horizon. The participants advise that we shouldn’t be giving the illusion that anyone can undoubtedly predict or control the future but instead, we should learn how to live with that. The answer to how to learn to live in uncertainty, specifically emphasized by Participants 3 and 8, lies in **the generative questions and how they are shifted into the smallest incremental changes**. The questions then change to “how is it that we are going to live well with uncertainty” and the idea is thinking about the ways in which people can engage without having to say what the future is. Participant 2 says it is about inquiring into what is powerful right now in this moment of the temporary in the world. In this temporary, once again pointed out by the participants, while we can’t control the future, we can have an influence on the slightest change possible and that is what we can do tomorrow as an individual. Participant 7 also draws the attention of this process being iterative and therefore, small changes are the most efficient ways to dream. Because how AI dreams, she adds, is both by a stretch to the unknown as much as their mental capacity allows and also grounded somehow at the same time. So this balance can be obtained by iterative processes and that suggest incremental changes.

Especially in the crisis context, it is essential to think through what is being asked from people to engage in AI. This certainly brings a shift in the change questions that OD interventions have, as well as AI. For example, the classic topic of organization at its best might receive resistance from

people due to a crisis going on. Instead, the questions should be generative and future-looking that understands that there is a complexity going on in the world, such as “how do we stay connected in our organization in the time where many people work from home” - a question that nobody knew in 2019 because that was not the reality of the world. The key is to become aware of the existence of changing world circumstances and therefore bring in **adjusted questions**.

To summarize, AI is helpful during a crisis or not, the interviewees have a total consensus that AI is even more compelling and relevant in these times, even that it was actually meant for times like this as it speaks to the most complex kinds of situations where people are in despair. Participant 2 puts “AI is well-positioned **to understand the complexity** going on and seek within that to design possibilities.”. For that, AI is a perfect tool and framework and every aspect and modality of AI is effective and meaningful in crisis. Those aspects are paying attention to learning and setting intentions, being aware, valuing the strengths and learning what needs to be done with the current situation, which is fundamental to any OD, with or without challenges/crises. Participant 2 says because of the clarity of the process of AI (the ways in which you discover, dream, design, deliver) and because it begins with a story of personal agency, it adapts powerfully to many circumstances and a thread is being pulled into the future. For that reason, it makes a perfect fit for applied when in a crisis. Because in the nature of crises, people have the need to be heard and AI addresses that need with its **generative questions** like “what does an ideal organization/situation look like in this environment where we can meet the needs of our stakeholders” or “what do we want tomorrow to look like.” Participant 8 puts an emphasis on the generative questions, that they help to look more deeply into crises and to make the invisible visible and to reinvent.

Below in Table 2, some additional quotes from the interviews are listed in order to demonstrate further how repetition in the collected data led to theoretical saturation. These quotes are listed respectively with their aforementioned second order themes that emerged from first order categories.

Table 2. Quotes from the Interviews for RQ1 Themes

Second Order Themes	Quotes from the Interviews
Acknowledgement	<p>P1: Appreciation is really to be fully aware and to value what it is so you could build on to even in a pandemic or whatever crisis there is. It is very important in an affirmative topic when you are exploring something, the context has to be acknowledged.</p>
	<p>P2: In that topic for the AI, think about given that this is an incredibly complex time for organizations, how might we be generative and future looking? So to think through really carefully what it is that we are asking people to engage in.</p>
	<p>P3: I disagree with the statement that the appreciation means that we have to appreciate the best experiences. So appreciation for me is appreciating the way people feel and give meaning to their lives in the context of pandemic. The first part of the appreciation is acknowledging and the second part of the appreciation is transcending and understanding what is of value and what matters the most. If any affirmative topic would disregard the world we are living in and be felt or perceived as naively optimistic then people will not accept that affirmative topic.</p>
	<p>P4: Every family has been impacted in the world by either someone they know or someone directly in their family, that has died from COVID-19. We have to be in that moment and we have to go through those feelings that we have and I think that really that's why appreciative inquiry, the story, matters.</p>
	<p>P5: Being in that curious state of mind and inquiring constantly, it is kind of riding the wave of this entire process.</p>
	<p>P7: The field of AI is maturing, but those of us who worked have learned that it is an important balance to have of what is not working and what is working. So it is a challenge for people that are not aware of the complexity of the experience.</p>
	<p>P8: To appreciate means to either add value to increase in value or to value what is.</p>

Table 2. (continued) Quotes from the Interviews for RQ1 Themes

Second Order Themes	Quotes from the Interviews
AI Mindset	<p>P1: Having to pay attention to learning and setting intentions and that is what AI is all about. You inquire, you are curious “what is happening now”, “what is valuable here”, “what is that we can do” and “how is that we can do it well”. Not the same way as before because we don’t know what’s going to happen, so “how is it that we are going to live well with uncertainty”. AI is the way of living, it’s not just 4D. 4D is just one model but what the whole process represents is the notion of being curious about what is working about, what’s really important to you, what end results you want.</p>
	<p>P3: The provocative thing is that seeing the crisis as an opportunity for change as well. So as not only something that hinders us or that immobilizes us, that’s the provocative part of AI in these times: to invite people and to take a provocative stance to look at the opportunities.</p>
	<p>P4: For individuals who are going through a crisis like COVID-19, there are choices you have to make such as how to pivot, how to create those opportunities that would bring value for the things that we appreciated the most. So how are we going to bring those learnings, those opportunities, through this pandemic and prepare for what is next? How can we help people to thrive, not just survive? We have to bring forward what we’ve learned and take that into the future so that we can do better in responding.</p>
	<p>P5: I see as a big opportunity for us and thinking about organizational change. There’s actually a lot of opportunity in that. So in times of crisis, it’s not really a new principal per se but it’s just that the steadfast intentionality to stay in a mode of inquiry, really bring added intentionality to that spirit of not just appreciation but of inquiry that we really are staying in a curious mindset.</p>
	<p>P6: The principle of appreciation is “what is this moment and time trying to teach us?” - for me that is the big question.</p>
	<p>P8: If you are going into anything with a fixed mindset, and now you are facing ambiguity and uncertainty with a fixed mindset, you are going to freeze. But with a growth mindset and a sense of curiosity, the whole world can open up. This is a mindset to live by.</p>

Table 2. (continued) Quotes from the Interviews for RQ1 Themes

Second Order Themes	Quotes from the Interviews
Generative Questions	<p>P1: You might start the appreciative question of “what innovative thing have you done in the last month”. It can be tiny, it doesn’t have to be huge and change the world.</p>
	<p>P2: We begin to ask different questions that are powerful inside an organization that lead to designs but people don’t have to say “on the other side of the Covid is going to look like this” because none of us know. We all know that the future is uncertain for each of us, we know that and we live with that.</p>
	<p>P3: Change questions now became for instance “how do we stay connected in our organization in the time where many people work from home”. That was a change question which we didn't know one and a half year ago because we didn't have that reality.</p>
	<p>P5: To me AI at its heart is fundamentally about asking generative questions. AI is a perfect framework for looking at the chaos that we are feeling and experiencing and asking those generative questions about “what do we want tomorrow to look like”. No matter how broken today feels, that's a generative invitation for us to create the future together. It doesn't have to be “what is the ideal organization”; that can be “what is the ideal best next step forward”. Because we don't know what tomorrow is going to look like so everything is a beta test. So the question becomes “what's the smallest incremental thing we can do tomorrow to move forward on this”.</p>
	<p>P6: The framing of the questions, the questions that are generative is the gift of AI. Giving people shorter steps helps people because then when you ask for plans and commitments “what can you do now in this month” so that you know you are already actioning immediately. It helps them to shift and have that clarity.</p>
	<p>P7: Before it was “what is your best past experience”, now it’s “what was in your deepest moment of despair, made you go for another day too”. So the discovery questions are changing to be able to incorporate the reality of the pandemic.</p>
	<p>P8: It's really about asking generative questions. Generative questions, in its simplest way are the ones that add value and change the way you think or the way you see things, and sometimes that can look like you're going more deeply into the crisis or into the thing that is negative; but what it's doing is making the invisible visible.</p>

As a conclusion to the question that seeks to identify what properties of AI can be particularly useful in times of a crisis, it is observed that AI helps to perceive the crisis as an opportunity by the way it appreciates and acknowledges the complexity, the mindset it carries and through its generative questions.

RQ2: How can Appreciative Inquiry implementation processes (e.g., 4D cycle) be modified to meet the current situation of the world during a crisis, namely the COVID-19 pandemic?

This part presents the collected data on how each step of the 4D Cycle can be interpreted during a crisis and what kinds of modifications are necessary to the existing model.

Figure 5 below shows the data structure for the RQ2, with the patterns of the raw data, emerged themes based on them and the link to the existing literature. Detailed findings are given further in this section with their respective themes and categories.

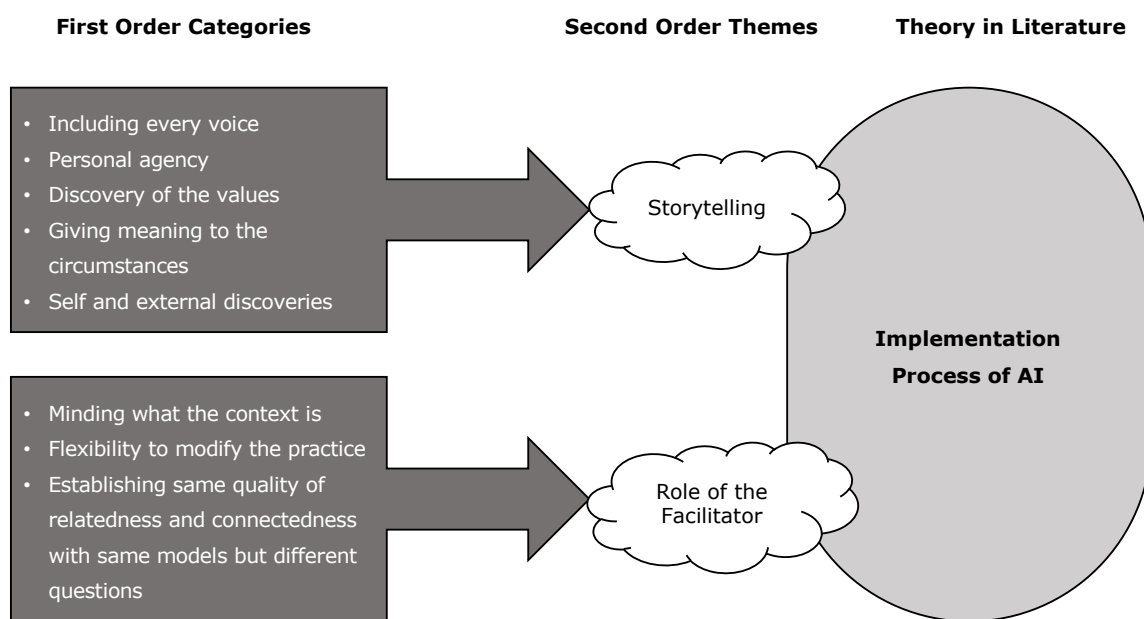


Figure 5. Data Structure of RQ2

Storytelling

The Affirmative Topic in a Crisis

All the participants say that the affirmative topic is the topic that acknowledges the challenges and hardships that are going on; therefore, no resistance for the topic can be expected as long as the situation is being recognized. If the topic doesn't **allow people to feel like they have been seen**, it then becomes difficult for people to engage. The topic shouldn't be totally blind to the fact that there is a crisis going on and it shouldn't disregard the world we are living in. Therefore, the craftsmanship of formulating the affirmative topic that acknowledges and transcends the situation of the world is now crucial.

Some practices that participants mentioned were found to be useful in this step during a crisis. Participant 2 finds doing a pre-inquiry to spend some time around how people are doing and how the crisis is affecting them, and then starting the AI process quite beneficial, as it not only acknowledges it but also spends some time around it. Similarly, Participant 4 speaks about how impactful **storytelling** is and without **people being given a chance to tell their stories**, they will not be able to move from that place to a new place of reframing it. And reframing, Participant 5 says, takes more intentionality when in a crisis mentality which easily makes people deficit-focused. Participant 6, therefore, finds the formation of a core team useful, which enables the AI practitioners to work on the small sample group that represents the whole and how they frame topics, perceive AI practice and their response.

Moreover, on top of the storytelling, Participant 5 thinks that the **broadening from self-discovery to external discovery** of inspiring examples in other places helps. She says that sometimes it is easier for some people to bring appreciative eyes to somebody else than it is to themselves, especially when the crisis mentality puts people into deficit focused mindset. So practicing this helps them to prime their own internal work. Therefore, external discovery can give the necessary push to go into that place of inner discovery.

Discovery: Catalyzing Energy-giving Factors during a Crisis

All of the participants give the same answer: storytelling itself is energy-giving, even more during crises. The first question that asks people to tell a story is important and should be inviting to show that **everyone can give their voice**, Participant 8 adds. "Tell me a story of a time when you were at your best" is too blithe of a question that needs some nuance in such times especially, such as **incorporating the values** aspect boosts the question, "what do you value in that story." Participant 3 gives an example of research that is conducted for the Dutch government to see the impact of COVID-19 on the public and to draw out the Netherlands-after-Covid, they asked the participants "what did you lose and why is it of value to you" in order to identify the way they **give meaning to the circumstances** they live in, how their energy-giving factors work. These sorts of necessary modifications are essential to be well thought through so that people feel like they belong in this conversation during a time of crisis.

Participant 8 points out that reinvention and innovative ways shouldn't come as top-down and rather be as inclusive as possible. This co-creation and **inclusiveness** start with the **storytelling**. Because as both Participant 6 and 7 explain, when people share their stories and what they are going through, that navigates them through the complexity. While people were talking about the times when they were strong and able to navigate through the challenges, they feel empowered and resilient because it was done with strengths-based questions. AI lets those people know that they were able to handle the disruptions well in the past and they can do it again. The storytelling also has an effect on other people than who is telling the story; they start seeing with empathetic eyes, so it strengthens relationships as well. The poetic and metaphorical aspect of AI that mobilizes people and the

language of it, together with the principles help people with their statements and provocative propositions.

Design: Establishing Togetherness during a Crisis

Unless there are technological problems, Participant 1 doesn't see any reason why doing the Design online isn't as energizing as it is face-to-face. In fact, with lots of new tools and technologies, the brainstorming and prototyping become very smooth in this phase. Participant 6 shares one of her practices wherein an online environment, she asked everyone to write down their Dream statement on a piece of paper and hold it to the screen, or when she asked everyone to open up their hands to the camera. She says at the end, when you look at the big picture, the image seems pretty empowering and it is the embodiment of collectiveness. Another example practice that was found quite beneficial also during the crisis is introduced by Participant 2, which is the use of "Champions." The Champions are anyone from the organization who will lift the idea up inside the organization and make it happen. She says that the notion of Champions really promotes the **sense of belonging** as it gives the feeling that anyone can Champion an idea from anywhere inside the organization, which also addresses some organizations who see power resting in a specific group of people only, on the hierarchical pyramid. Where there is such a feeling, it is difficult to **establish connectedness**. What helps with establishing connectedness is to talk about the shared vision and goal, says Participant 4. Participant 3 supports this argument by pointing out that connectedness starts when sharing and listening to stories. Participant 7 summarizes this by saying that the Design step actually addresses one of the most challenging parts of the crisis, which is isolation, by meeting the need for togetherness in the aforementioned ways. Once this connectedness is established, it gets carried to this phase where you prototype designs. However, Participant 5 points out that it should not be forgotten that Design is not about designing a perfect solution, but it is mapping out what can work best in the given circumstances tomorrow. Approaching everything as if it is a beta test and doing incremental changes are key to get unstuck.

Role of the Facilitator

Dreaming in a Crisis

It is found by the participants that this step doesn't change much, but more attention has to be given to certain aspects of this practice. Participant 2 also says she doesn't change the Dream phase much but encourages people to think and dream about the future as we humans yearn to dream even in a crisis. Participant 3 looks from the angle that since crises teach us what matters most to us more than ordinary circumstances, doing a Dream exercise and envisioning the most wanted futures might be easier in times like this. To imagine that, Participant 6 thinks that it helps people in these times to think in the shorter term, medium-term and longer-term. She refers to an example in Louisiana during one of the hurricanes when people there were asked about their plans in 1, 3, 6 months and 2 years from that time helped them to envision a better time. The people there said that not focusing on what they have lost wouldn't have helped them because there is nothing to do, but instead focusing on concrete plans for the future gave hope to them. Those concrete plans and the dreamed future, including specific features, are also emphasized by Participant 5. She says that it might even feel paradoxical that the people are invited to dream differently, but also being very

concrete with it. Both short-term and concrete plans that were emphasized by the participants support the benefits of approaching the change with small increments, as it enhances the functionality of this step during a crisis. To enable that, there are various activities she gives as examples such as drawing, writing or answering questions such as “what is the newspaper headline 3 years from now that is your organization has become”. The idea behind this is that it is not an unrealistic way of seeing things from rose-colored glasses, but rather a more grounded visioning. So it is a lot about **the practitioner setting this context**. Therefore, **the role of the facilitator in times of crisis becomes more paramount**. The facilitator should be able to hold the people who are hurting on some level, spend a lot more time on the topic and a lot more time with the group to **ensure the complexity is acknowledged** and yet a vision for the future is sought. So the changes are not so much on the phase itself but in the words of the facilitators use to prompt those different pieces in the cycle.

Overall, all participants say that the 4D model holds in times like this, fundamentally does not need to change in times of crises but as Participant 3 points out, the crisis brings us to new questions, new support mechanisms **to establish the same quality of relatedness and connectedness**. The 4D model has a **simple structure requiring good facilitation** where facilitators pay attention to what is happening with the people in the physical or online environment. Therefore, Participant 1 says that **the models are always modified based on the context**. Participant 4 says, “the 4D model has been modified from its inception, it was immediately modified and immediately changing and evolving into different paradigms: the ALIVE model, the SOAR model and the work around diversity, equity and inclusion revisions too.”. This shows that AI represents a living entity that can be adapted and was intended that way by David Cooperrider from the very beginning by making it an open, not copyrighted model. Therefore the design for appreciative resilience, ALIVE (Appreciate what is, Love, Inquire, Venture, Evolve), was developed by Participant 1 and 2 specifically for a big-time tragedy by shifting the classic 4D model into a brand-new model to meet resilience during a highly challenging time. Participant 2 explains this appreciative resilience model as AI running around the outside and inside of the deep conversation about hope, despair and forgiveness organizationally and using the experiences within those states to cultivate resilience.

However, whichever model is being used, it is pointed out by multiple participants that a lot of people get stuck by the rules and follow everything step by step and that is not the way it works. Instead, it is important to pay attention to the context, people involved, the purpose, etc., that requires good facilitation. **Facilitators need to be ready to diverge with the group**, attend to the needs of them and not be afraid to go where the group needs to go because it doesn’t make sense to force the next step to the group if they aren’t ready. It is crucial that **facilitators are willing to be creative within the model** and think about ways in which they can go where the group might need to be. Participant 5 adds to this by saying that the models are always just tools and people should not use them as linear checkboxes but rather internalize the underlying principles and how to bring them to life. Furthermore, in regards to what good facilitation means, Participant 4 recommends doing a lot of self-discovery to see which models the facilitators work the best and what models they lean on the most. The role and impact of a good facilitator, Participant 6 says, is showing what’s

important is to show the call to action in this time for the community and showing what role individuals can play in times like this. It is about creating the agents of change in the world.

Below in Table 3, some additional quotes from the interviews are listed in order to demonstrate further how repetition in the collected data led to theoretical saturation. These quotes are listed respectively with their aforementioned second order themes that emerged from first order categories.

Table 3. Quotes from the Interviews for RQ2 Themes

Second Order Themes	Quotes from the Interviews
Storytelling	P1: It's still the storytelling and engaging in the conversation and being deeply listened to - that's where the energy comes when people share those.
	P2: AI is built to seek individual agency within a circumstance. And as soon as people find the tiniest thread of personal agency, the ability to personally engage with something, they begin to venture and evolve. Because AI begins with the nature of a story, it's narrative based, it allows people to enter into the complexity we are in right now. And in that story, there is a thread that gets pulled into the future.
	P3: Inviting people to share stories about what they are experiencing and inviting them to listen to each other's stories is already the phase where the connection gets built. The modification we did during COVID-19 is that before asking people a question about what new things have emerged that they appreciate due to the pandemic, the first question becomes "what did you lose and why is it of value to you".
	P4: Sometimes people fall back into problem-solving mode and let's face it, not everybody wants you to fix the problems! Sometimes they just need you to hear them. In institutions, in human systems, my experience has been that they need to be heard. I think what AI does first is it allows people to tell a story. Sometimes the story is not positive but if you don't have the story, you are not moving people from that place to a place of reframing it.
	P5: Holding the assumption that even in a crisis there's something to be discovered, sometimes the broadening it from self-discovery to also external discovery helps. So rather than just starting with discovering their own past as an organization (because it's changing) we also did Discovery work of "let's look outside of your organization, what are the inspiring practices that you see other people doing right now".
	P7: People want to feel agency and they don't want to feel alone. So the Design step in particular centers their agency and does so in community in collaboration.
	P8: When you're dealing with crisis or any kind of trauma, in the Discovery that first question the group who is designing it should be asking "do we need to first make sure everybody can give voice to what this crisis or trauma has meant for them.

Table 3. (continued) Quotes from the Interviews for RQ2 Themes

Second Order Themes	Quotes from the Interviews
Role of the Facilitator	<p>P1: Context is everything. A lot of people think by the rules and follow everything step by step and it becomes a disaster. So it's about good facilitation. 4D has a nice simple structure requiring really good facilitation where facilitators pay attention to what is happening with the people in the physical room or virtual room. The role of the facilitator is crucial.</p>
	<p>P2: The role of the AI facilitator in times of tragedy becomes more and more and more paramount. The skill of that person to hold the container, to gather people who are hurting on some level and just hold that container for them while they do their work is a powerful facilitation practice. So the changes are not so much in the cycle itself but in the words facilitators use to prompt those different pieces in the cycle. So the facilitator needs to be ready to attend to the needs of the group, a kind of a hyper-vigilant level and not be afraid as a facilitator to go where the group needs to go.</p>
	<p>P3: Crisis brings us practitioners to the questions and challenges, to think about solutions that again support the same quality of relatedness and connectedness in online settings and how do we design that, what is available or to be developed - that is the important question.</p>
	<p>P4: The 4D cycle, very basics of AI, when you ask the question "can we change the implementation process, can we modify this", it has been modified from its inception it was immediately modified and immediately changing and evolving into different paradigms: the ALIVE model, the SOAR model... All of these different approaches that are being used right now and then of course the work that we're doing now with diversity, equity and inclusion we are revising it yet again.</p>
	<p>P5: The models to me are always just tools and as long as people are using them not as linear checkboxes and are recognizing that they are frameworks and staying in that mode of inquiry. AI is really about the underlying principles and how am I bringing the principles to life. So as long as we're like iterating on those, it's increasingly important in a crisis situation that people don't treat the D's of the 4D like a lockstep checkbox - because they're not.</p>
	<p>P7: Facilitator's role and core team is really important in order not to miss the boat for the rest.</p>

In conclusion, the answer to the question of whether the AI implementation processes need to be modified when applied during a crisis is no in essence. The models of AI hold because they are based on the sharing through **storytelling** and co-creation of futures. However, the **process is meant to be changed with the context**, needs of the participants and their environment. Here, **the role of the facilitator is paramount** in order for them to approach certain aspects with care.

RQ3: Are there any organizational factors that can facilitate the implementation of Appreciative Inquiry during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic?

This part first discusses what organizational factors are necessary for an organization to survive a crisis and what kind of role AI plays in that. Then it aims to examine the organizational factors of were effective communication, organizational trust and organizational resilience in terms of the role they play in the implementation process of AI and the ways in which they become the outcomes of the process.

Figure 6 below shows the data structure for the RQ3, with the patterns of the raw data, emerged themes based on them and the link to the existing literature as an overview of the presentation of the findings for this section.

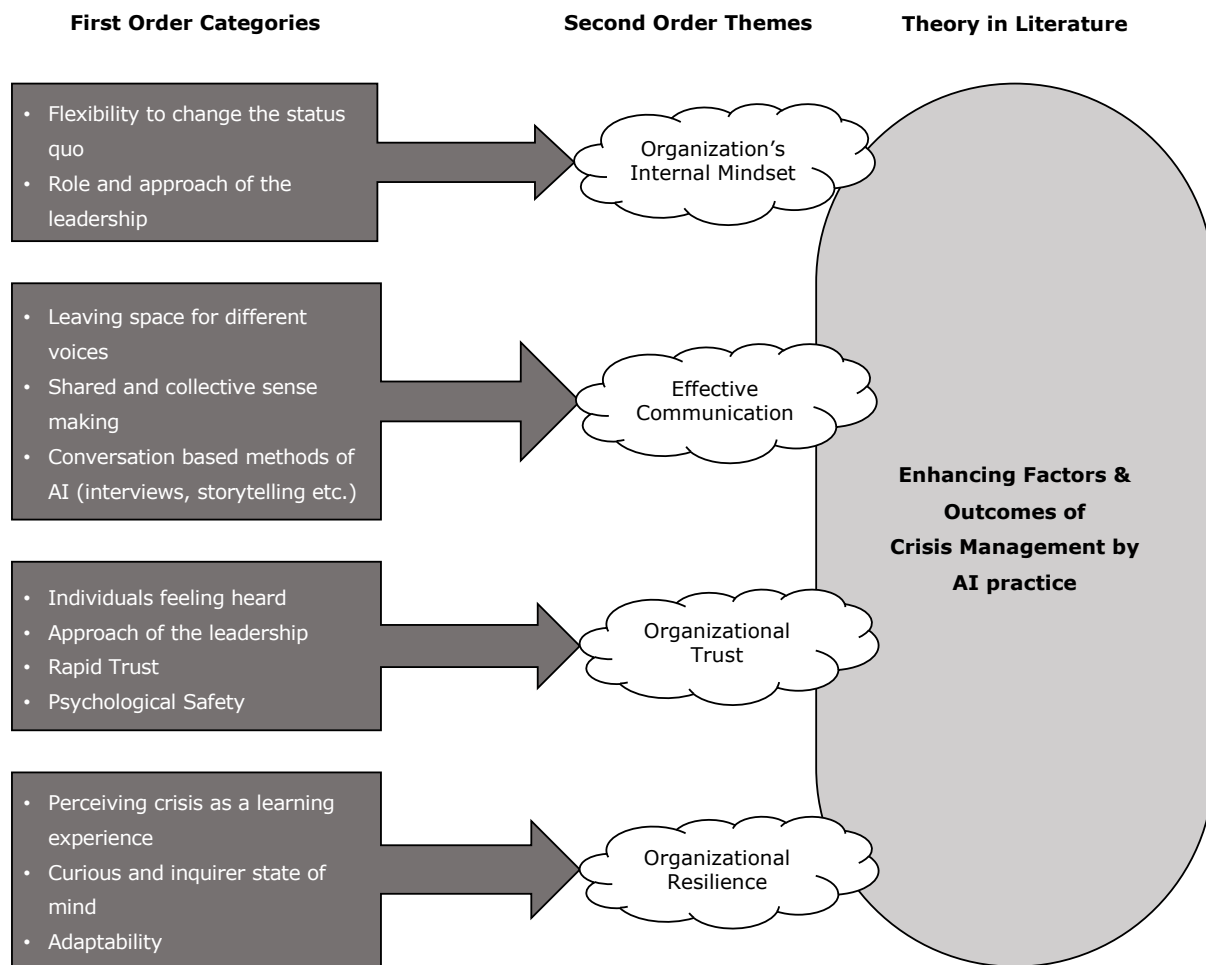


Figure 6. Data Structure RQ3

Organization's Internal Mindset

The **internal mindset of an organization** is an important factor to tell how they would survive a crisis. If the mindset includes the ability to put focus on the solution rather than the problem, that is an important factor, according to Participant 3. Furthermore, the mentality of living by the principles of AI and the daily practice of it is a success factor, says Participant 1. She elaborates on the principles: The constructionist principle, that our words create worlds so how careful we are with our words and conversations; the simultaneity of AI, how the first question being asked is so faithful and how careful we are around it; the poetic, what is being chosen to focus on in an organization; the anticipatory, how to envision the future that impacts the actions of today; the wholeness and the narrative with all the principles - how one perceives and live by the principles of AI is a success factor.

Not only the mindset they have but also being aware of and the **flexibility to change** it if needed. All participants put an emphasis on how important flexibility is. Participant 4 summarizes it "AI gives that one piece to human systems that they don't always have, which is being adaptable and flexible.". This flexibility plays a significant role in how one organization perceives change. Participant 5 gives this as one success factor, the way change is perceived. She gives having a reinvention mindset as a success factor, the curiosity to discover how to evolve from the current situation. She

quotes one of her colleagues, "Change isn't a punishment; it's the ultimate freedom to create what you want."

Participants 5, 7 and 8 specifically draw attention to **leadership** and how it shouldn't be underestimated, especially in crises. For example, whether the leadership brings different voices together or not or how open and collaborative in nature it is. Participant 3 backs this up by saying that this factor, whether the organization leaves space for different voices and narratives or not, brings a substantial competitive advantage to the organization. Participant 5 adds that this invitation for different individuals to work has a significant impact. To add, Participant 4 states this as a factor, making the individuals inside the organization feel like the administration communicates issues in a way that individuals feel like things are being with them and not to them.

Effective Communication

Highly effective communication in certain levels of quality is essential to be established according to all of the participants. Participant 4 says that this is the **natural recurring effect of AI through the conversations** people have with others who come from different contexts by being open to different perspectives. AI invites us to relate to each other in a more humane and dignified way, Participant 3 says. This way, **unique voices are not problematized**. Participant 2 stresses the fact that even the simplest communication becomes essential when people are distanced and all channels of communication are virtual, so everything has to be in over communication now. To overcome this, she says the organizations need to be conscious that the generative communication cycle is going on.

Participant 5 makes a link with effective communication and AI from the **shared, collective sense-making** aspect of AI. She emphasizes the social constructionist theory, which is individuals creating meaning together. For organizations, it is the same way. For that reason, communication shouldn't be top-down; it should be co-created instead. So the Participant 6 looks at effective communication from the perspective of the leadership. She says that although the staff knows that the ship is about to sink before the leadership, sometimes leadership isn't openly communicating things. She then gives examples of different world leaders and how they communicated the lockdown measures and the response they got in the long term.

Organizational Trust

The essential organizational factor that cannot be established without effective and open communication in organizations is organizational trust. How to establish and enhance that in a crisis situation is the million-dollar question the organizations ask, as Participant 3 puts. However, Participant 1 says trust can look different in organizations and the complexity of it can only be understood by having more conversations about it. That is how Participant 7 says that AI engenders high levels of trust. Because as Participants 2 and 8 say, the **individuals need to be heard** and need to feel like their organization knows what is going on for them. Not in an unrealistic way, but to give the message "we have your back as we humanly possibly can in the middle of this crisis.". The downfall of communication in these times of crisis, Participant 2 says, is making declarative

statements that aren't true and are even less true in a virtual environment where it's even more difficult to know what is going on for an individual. So being declarative is something that organizations need to watch out for. Participant 6 also emphasizes that trust is linked a lot with communication inside the organization. It is important to have honesty, genuineness and a **leader's authenticity in the communication**, especially in regards to the commitment to the story being told to show trustworthiness.

Participant 5 adds a form of trust which becomes increasingly important, especially in a crisis: **psychological safety**. It is a sense of trust that individuals feel like they can share their voices and perspectives and not be humiliated or punished for it. This has high importance when fundamentally AI is asking people to share their ideas from Discovery and if there isn't psychological safety, this becomes challenging. People have used AI processes to help build trust because going through this work together helps to cultivate trust. However, one can't have a summit to build trust; trust is built through the doing of the work together in the AI process. So Participant 5 really stresses that attention has to be paid here to building and strengthening psychological safety in order for people to bring themselves to the table.

Moreover, Participant 3 introduces the concept of **Rapid Trust**, the concept that means trust is not a condition to be established with long preparations, but it is that one starts from trust. Similarly, Participant 4 says, "Trust is a verb." That we have to trust in order to have trust when the issues arise. Because when there is a severe condition that an organization (or the world) has never faced before, there is no time to slow to build trust. And at this point, things boil down to communication again, individuals increasing their awareness and understanding of how people communicate.

Organizational Resilience

Furthermore, another organizational factor besides effective communication and organizational trust that all the participants agree on is organizational resilience. Resilience and the practice of AI during a crisis are intrinsically linked. Participant 6 says organizational resilience is a muscle to be flexed to become stronger and needs to be practiced. With the same analogy made by Participant 5, AI helps to build the resiliency muscle in many ways. It helps not only to face the current situation but the future disruptions too. To build up this resiliency muscle, the organization should celebrate the successes and build confidence but also **stay in a curious and inquirer state** to discover possibilities and allocate resources for future wins that they envision. Not only for the wins but also for the failures, Participant 4 says that resilient communities occur because people bend together around whatever crisis is going on. She says being able to stay sensitive to individuals, having empathy is vital. Therefore, resiliency becomes an output of these processes as well as a success factor.

Participants 6 and 8 refer to the work of Participants 1 and 2 on resilience in times of despair, how hope is activated in times of complexity disruption. Participant 2 explains that organizational resilience is about amplifying hope when it exists and for hope to flourish in the most ordinary of times to form a resilience bank, as she calls. The resilience bank is formed by turning into what is

generative, meaningful and flourishing inside the organization. In times of crisis, amplifying people’s strengths is one other aspect of resilience. Another crucial aspect that is powerfully important in organizational resilience is the act of forgiveness inside the organization. One thing that can get an organization to cover these aspects of organizational resilience is the simplest of appreciative inquiry practices: generative questions. It still is “tell me a story of a time of your strengths” but it is abbreviated “what have we done well since yesterday” and not “how has this become worse and worse and worse,” not “who’s to blame,” not “how the hell did we end up here” but “what have we done well since yesterday.” Where organizational resilience resides powerfully is the place of generative questions. Participant 1 adds to it by mentioning appreciative reframing, **the ability to see the opportunities and possibilities**, which is the robust nature of AI.

Participant 3 links the notion of organizational resilience with biological terms of “survival of the fittest” by Darwin. He says the survival of the fittest doesn’t mean that only the strongest survive; it means the one who adapts survives. Participant 3 sees organizational resilience as very aligned with **adaptiveness**. In order to be adaptive, the central task or feature is learning and being open to the environment, being curious and inquiring.

As it was illustrated before with Figure 3, the organizational factors of effective communication, organizational trust and organizational resilience are both infused in the AI process and outcomes of it.

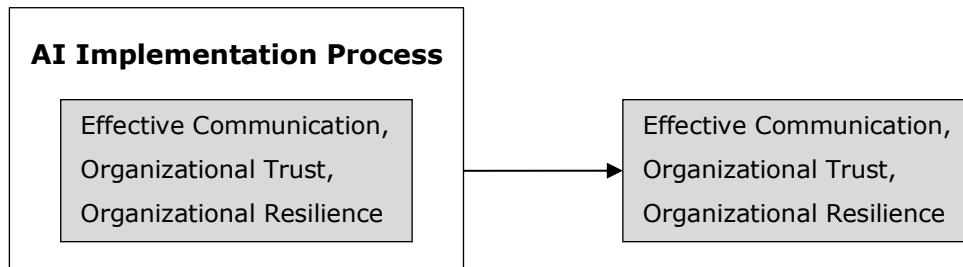


Figure 3. The organizational factors as a part and one of the outcomes of the AI process

Based on these data, it is seen that these organizational factors are a part of the AI implementation process as well as the process can be used to establish or augment these factors within the organization. Effective communication is the natural recurring effect of the AI process due to the conversation-based methods. AI processes include the collective sense-making and co-creation of an ideal, which essentially is the roots of organizational trust together with open communication. Therefore, during the AI processes, the organizational trust is amplified and it affects the success of the AI practice. Similarly, organizational resilience is intrinsically linked with AI processes as the inquirer state of AI combined with the co-creation and togetherness aspects result in the resiliency muscle being built. So the more resilient the organization is, the higher the adaptability and learning from opportunities.

Below in Table 4, some additional quotes from the interviews are listed in order to demonstrate further how repetition in the collected data led to theoretical saturation. These quotes are listed respectively with their aforementioned second order themes that emerged from first order categories.

Table 4. Quotes from the Interviews for RQ3 Themes

Second Order Themes	Quotes from the Interviews
Organization's Internal Mindset	P1: The being AI and the daily practice of AI is a success factor because that's what will engage people.
	P3: The internal mindset speaks about the beliefs we collectively hold. It's not only about the mindset you have, it's also about being aware of the mindset you hold. And if the mindset you hold isn't helping you in surviving in pandemic times, then you need the flexibility to change it.
	P4: I think AI gives that one piece to human systems that they don't always have, which is being adaptable and flexible.
	P5: We can't underestimate the impact that a single leader can have, especially in crisis situations. Does the leader encourage this kind of work and the bringing together of the voices?
	P6: As facilitators we had to figure out how to pivot it virtually, how to make the activities that will help people to still be engaged or connect. So in terms of the organizations, yes it depends on the individuals, but also on the leaders. The leaders kind of gather the troops and motivate and encourage us "we will come through this".
	P7: Only thing that I would name no matter what is the readiness of the leadership. If there is the apex here that is ready and willing to be collective or share power in how solutions are arrived at, that's where I felt that there is either a make or break.
	P8: Leadership that is open and collaborative in nature is an important success factor. In a crisis there is no place for ego. So it's having leadership that recognizes "this is a major disruption and I don't have the answers but together we can get the answers" that will make an organization successful.

Table 4. (continued) Quotes from the Interviews for RQ3 Themes

Second Order Themes	Quotes from the Interviews
Effective Communication	<p>P1: Highly effective communication is essential and I think that's somewhere to start in an organization as you do an inquiry into "how does highly effective communication look like?". Let the organization define it.</p>
	<p>P2: One of the things that is paramount for organizations using AI in times of crisis is communication. I think attending to powerful communication in times of crisis is really really important.</p>
	<p>P3: In my understanding of AI, it invites people to converse with each other in a certain way and with a certain quality.</p>
	<p>P4: Effective communication is a natural recurring effect of AI. Every individual in the community that is having the conversation and engaged in the conversation, they are coming from different contexts in different places and spaces. So being able to have adaptability and flexibility to listen to each other, I think it's very key in this.</p>
	<p>P5: Effective communication very much aligns with AI. That's what we are doing, communicate it and communicate again, sharing perspectives and information in a variety of different modalities and trying to collectively make sense of it together and to create new meaning together. Ultimately AI is a social constructionist theory, the idea that we create meaning together.</p>
	<p>P6: People know that communication shouldn't be top-down; it should be co-created instead.</p>
	<p>P7: If you are able to get everybody involved in the dream, then there is no tripwires around where you are going in this crisis because people were part of shaping it. So in that way AI is a communication tool and can be vital for communicating during crises.</p>
	<p>P8: I think what makes AI as a framework for communication distinct is its emphasis on co-construction as opposed to transactional. So as we engage together, how do we bring all of that into the middle as opposed to being top-down or making it a transaction.</p>

Table 4. (continued) Quotes from the Interviews for RQ3 Themes

Second Order Themes	Quotes from the Interviews
Organizational Trust	P1: Trust can look different with the way people interpret it. There are levels underneath that complex notion of trust, you really need to tease out and then say what is going on here that we need to have more conversations about.
	P2: Organizational trust is about whether or not I as a member of the organization feel like the organization knows what's going on for me. So the role of the organization writ large in a crisis is to be trustworthy.
	P3: There is a correlation between crisis and Rapid Trust. Because if we are in a severe condition where we face things that we have never faced before, then we don't have the time to in a slow matter build up a trust. So the crisis urges us, makes us step into trust - Rapid Trust.
	P4: Organizational trust is key but trust comes from individuals, it doesn't come from a building. So you have to help people to understand that trust is a process, it is something that we have to work through and it's something that we have to work towards because not everybody trusts easily.
	P5: Psychological safety is a form of trust and it's becoming increasingly important we know in team research and in crisis situations. It's very much related to trust, that sense of the trust that I can share my perspective, share my voice, then again from a psychological safety perspective of the belief that I can share a different idea and not be humiliated, punished for it.
	P7: AI engenders high levels of trust. Because it breaks boundaries between people and get to know each other, build relationships. If the conditions of the leadership are supporting what the whole comes up with, it also engenders that kind of trust for the leadership. Trustworthy organization includes everybody else's voices.
	P8: If you have people coming from those ways of communicating and operating openly, that by itself develops trust - because people know their voices and opinions matter since they are listened too.

Table 4. (continued) Quotes from the Interviews for RQ3 Themes

Second Order Themes	Quotes from the Interviews
Organizational Resilience	P1: The part of appreciative intelligence, the ability to see what is there that is a possibility and opportunity. So I think that's the key, appreciative reframing.
	P2: That place of generative questions is where organizational resilience powerfully resides.
	P3: The survival of the fittest means that the one who adapts will survive. So it's not being the strongest, it's being the most adaptive. For me being adaptive and being resilient is the same. In order to be adaptive, the central task or feature is learning. So if you are open to your environment, if you're curious and you do inquire into what is happening, if you're flexible you are versatile.
	P4: I think the resilience comes from bending in together during a crisis. So it's about that empathy and ability to feel and to have your finger on the pulse of the organization as human beings.
	P5: In many ways AI helps to build the resiliency muscle, it helps you not only face this current situation, but we know there's going to be more disruptions in the future. Resiliency becomes an output of the processes of inquiry, or discovery of lifting up what's working, the state of visioning; and it also becomes a success factor.
	P6: In this time of complexity disruption "how have we been surviving, how did we survive before and how can you survive this to move forward" - that's how I see organizational resilience through AI.
	P7: AI really contributes to organizational resilience because it works at multiple levels, both at the inter and intra personal relationships for people and solutions - that's important for organizational resilience.
	P8: Resilience is that ability to pause and take a deep breath and get curious with "where am I, where do I want to go". This kind of mindset creates resilience because you know that no matter what comes your way you will be able to find value in it and you will be able to move from it to the next thing.

In conclusion, the internal mindset of an organization, the levels of effective communication, organizational trust and how resilient they are considered as important factors that moderate the AI practice during a crisis. Not only these moderate but also observed to be outcomes of the AI practices.

Additional Findings

This section tackles the additional findings that surfaced during the interviews. Figure 7 below shows the data structure for the additional findings, with the patterns of the raw data, emerged themes based on them and the link to the existing literature.

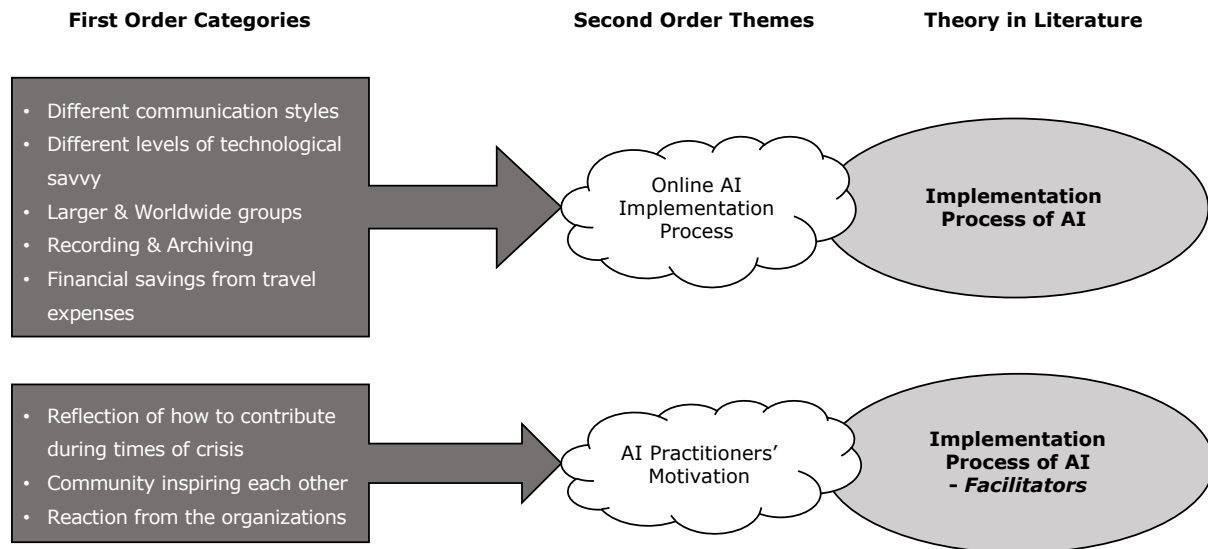


Figure 7. Data Structure of Additional Findings

Online AI Implementation Process

All of the participants point out that a lot can be done both face-to-face and online. The general consensus is that there are things that are gained and lost online, but there are also things that are gained and lost in face-to-face. The key to getting results from online versions is to explore what can possibly work well in the given situation and work with what you have, as there are many creative ways to do things. Although it is not exactly the same as the traditional way, the differences, according to the participants, are all superficial and not profound in terms of the process itself but really are about engagement with the technology.

To explain the aspects of engagement with the technology, Participant 2 says, "The best practices really are about as a practitioner to really know your technology and to really understand how that technology is going to flow right from the invitation to the Design and beyond." Participant 1 adds to that by saying that it is crucial to pay attention to people's **different communication and personality styles**, needs and their organizational setting. A summary of it is given by Participant 5, and she puts it as "go where people are fine." Participants 2 and 5 put an emphasis on the importance of the creation of community online and bringing people together into a co-creation space. For some communities, it's smoother than others, but for some, the use of technology can be a very tricky part and get in the way of people feeling like they can participate. Therefore, it is vital to **be aware of the audience and their technological savvy** in terms of using the technology. Besides the savvy, one other aspect of technology acting as a barrier is that the online environment makes it more difficult to tell how small groups are doing and therefore, it relies on

groups being able to self-manage and follow instructions. Similar to that, another disadvantage is the feeling of the energy flowing between people being harder to establish in an online environment.

On the other hand, Participant 3 gives the example of a summit that was typically done with 700 people but now, with the online summit, the steering committee of the project is challenging the limits with the scale of reach. They are planning to have 2-3 days of a summit with 25 000 + participants, which Participant 3 calls "unseen in AI." But now, this **inclusiveness with bigger numbers is possible**. Likewise, Participant 5 gives an example of a successful summit of 800 people. These numbers **also reflect the under-represented voices** which normally cannot travel for a summit. Although there are internet accessibility issues in the world, not having to travel provides more accessibility and bigger participation numbers. Another advantage of an online environment that Participant 5 gives is the possibility of **recording and archiving**. Furthermore, there is the possibility of offering people different forms and modalities of sharing their voice (through the chatbox, through unmuting and talking, etc.) because it is essential to ensure participation in the ways in which people feel comfortable. These advantages come on top of the **financial benefits**, as Participant 8 adds, saved from travel and event organizational expenses.

This crisis forced people to give technology a chance and there appeared to be very positive outcomes. In the future, all participants think that there will be a mixed model, a combination of online and face-to-face, since there are valuable things in both to take advantage of. All believe that there is no going back and these learnings will be brought to the future. The technology solutions are to be used as a supporting tool, and coming face-to-face is to be much more intentional.

AI Practitioners' Motivation

All of the participants say that what kept them alive in this time is their worldwide community of AI practitioners. All of them stayed connected because of **their passion** for this kind of work and got inspired by each other. This gave them also a **sense of belonging** and inclusiveness. All of them mentioned that they tried to live by the AI principles and the daily practice of it. They had a moment to think about "what might I do generatively to **contribute** positively to this moment of tragedy," rather than labeling things as positive or negative. This work itself has been feeding them and giving life to them with its own **positive feedback loop during the practice** that the process itself is rewarding. They are also busy with the question of how AI can be used or the knowledge developed in crisis times to contribute to the bigger picture.

Below in Table 5, some additional quotes from the interviews are listed in order to demonstrate further how repetition in the collected data led to theoretical saturation. These quotes are listed respectively with their aforementioned second order themes that emerged from first order categories.

Table 5. Quotes from the Interviews for Additional Findings' Themes

Second Order Themes	Quotes from the Interviews
Online AI Implementation Process	<p>P1: You have to think of more facilitator tools that are allowing people of different kinds of communication styles and personality styles. You have to think about the different styles and what is meeting their needs, which isn't done very well even face-to-face most of the time.</p>
	<p>P2: I am hyper aware of who the audience is being invited to the AI and what is their technological savvy in terms of using the technology. The best practices really are about as a practitioner to really know your technology, to really understand how that technology is going to flow right from the invitation to the Design and beyond.</p>
	<p>P3: We see the new possibilities occur and we even wouldn't have explored if we didn't have the COVID-19 situation. Maybe we will do more hybrid versions of summits or AI processes but what we learn now about the advantages of this whole online learning, I am sure that many of these advantages we are going to keep.</p>
	<p>P4: I think we'll bring our learnings from this crisis into the future and it is going to make our work more meaningful, effective and cost efficient from a broader distance.</p>
	<p>P5: So there's actually some added benefits that I'm seeing as people use technologies from having recordings to have a digital archive of conversations that otherwise we don't have, to have multiple ways for people to participate from. I know there's internet accessibility issues and things too but it helps to make participation potentially more egalitarian.</p>
	<p>P6: The gift of the virtual space is almost immediate, it's much more inclusive with bigger numbers.</p>
	<p>P7: You can really get a diversity and depth of people you are engaging in summits, in ways that face-to-face was usually cost prohibitive.</p>
	<p>P8: Having everything online, so people were capturing things instead of flipcharts, they were actually capturing it in a way that all the data was captured by the time we were done and we didn't have to go back and capture data from the flipcharts into a document. So that made life easier. No travelling, no expenses associated with the venue and food and hotels etc.</p>

Table 5. (continued) Quotes from the Interviews for Additional Findings' Themes

Second Order Themes	Quotes from the Interviews
AI Practitioners' Motivation	<p>P1: In these times of crisis, what kept me alive is that the connection to my worldwide community of AI inquirers. All of us stay connected for our passion for this kind of work, this is what is holding all of us together.</p>
	<p>P2: Us deeply asking ourselves in moments of tragedy "what are we doing with that privilege, what is the responsibility of that privilege in this moment", "what might I do generatively to contribute positively to this moment of tragedy" and so I think that there's that powerful self-generation of having a call to action in times of tragedy for people who practice AI appreciative inquiry."</p>
	<p>P3: Live with the question "how can we use our knowledge and how can we use the principles of AI also in these times" there is a whole area of possibilities. Many people who are doing research on AI or who practice AI are actually in this period are looking for ways how we can use or develop our knowledge and use AI in pandemic times.</p>
	<p>P5: Your role as a facilitator isn't about "how am I helping them to see all the positive things" ; it's rather "what is the question, the inquiry that's going to help us move forward and see things differently". It's not about cheering them up or any of that; it's what is it that's going to help move them forward.</p>
	<p>P6: What kept me encouraged and motivated in this time is really seeing the gift of others, either asking us to come back to help them with processes.</p>
	<p>P7: It's already so rewarding to do this work in this time. It feeds me so much in this time of the pandemic, to be able to come together virtually to seek the strengths that are there.</p>
	<p>P8: One of the beautiful things about AI is that it creates a positive feedback loop. I can come in to facilitate a session or teach a course with low energy and by the time I'm done I'm so full of energy and excitement because this whole process, it feeds itself. So I think it feeds the facilitator just the way it feeds everybody else.</p>

It is seen that the implementation process of AI got affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in many ways, two of which are the discovery of the online implementation process and how the crisis reflected on the AI community.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this study was to find an answer to the question “How can Appreciative Inquiry (AI) help organizations go through transformational changes during the COVID-19 pandemic?”. To be more specific with the objectives, the goal was to identify the features of AI that carry paramount significance during a crisis, to discover if/how the AI implementation process needs to be modified for a crisis and the organizational factors to facilitate the implementation of AI during a crisis.

The findings from the data suggest that AI actually works perfectly in such times, in fact, the community of practice believes that AI is even made for times like this. AI accomplishes that by having a curious mindset with a hunger for new learnings and improvement. Therefore AI helps people to see complex situations as an opportunity with its affirmative topic reframing by still acknowledging the situation, its generative questions that bring people together, its storytelling as an invitation for inclusiveness and togetherness to co-create futures together in a collaborative manner. AI navigates organizations through crises by inviting them to look from the point of view where incremental changes are possible under their circle of influence and that circle can change with different circumstances. What important is that AI processes enable for different circumstances is the flexibility and resilience to adapt by being open for development emerging anytime. Not only AI helps to enable and enhance that resiliency muscle, but also helps to build and strengthen trust and communication within the organization. This is a lot correlated with the already existing mindset of the organization but also dependent on how the facilitator notices some of these factors are needed to be worked on. Therefore, the flexibility and skills of the facilitator carry the utmost importance in crisis times. The models of AI hold, but the context constantly changes, crisis or not. It is in the hands of the facilitator to adapt the process to the needs of the organization and its external environment. Hence, the findings of this study shares the insights that are absolutely crucial to mind while having an AI practice, especially in a crisis context.

The data collected in this study include some findings that prove that the organizational factors of effective communication, organizational trust and organizational resilience are not conditions that are in the way of the success of AI implementation process; but are outcomes and can be established with the AI processes and practices, as the practice of them already begins with the AI implementation process. This is an important finding to consider what the reach of the outcomes of an AI process can be. However, it should be noted that these factors are only established if they are deeply infused, therefore cannot be established with one-time AI practices.

When these highlights are gathered and refined to their essence, the table below is obtained as the main takeaways from this study. Table 6 below works as a breakdown of the findings to represent the ways in which AI is an excellent solution for organizations to go through transformational changes during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, together with their implications.

Table 6. Breakdown of the findings to the main research question "How can AI help organizations go through transformational changes during the COVID-19 pandemic?"

Research Question	First Order Category	Second Order Themes	Implications
<p>"Which features of Appreciative Inquiry can be particularly useful in a time of a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic?"</p>	Acknowledgement of the complex situation	Acknowledgement	Find a healthy, non-ignorant and mindful balance of appreciating into the circumstances and creating meaning of it.
	Balance of what is working and what isn't		
	Creating meaning of the circumstances		
	Having a growth mindset as an organization	AI Mindset	AI is the glasses that help to see the crisis as an opportunity.
	Having a curious mindset as an organization		
	Perceiving crisis as an opportunity to learn		
	Change questions shifting to be relevant	Generative Questions	Crisis shifts the generative questions of AI into the smallest incremental changes in order to learn how to live in uncertainty.
	Navigating in uncertainty with incremental steps		
<p>"How can Appreciative Inquiry implementation processes (e.g. 4D cycle) be modified to meet the current situation of the world during a crisis, namely the COVID-19 pandemic?"</p>	Including every voice	Storytelling	AI values the strengths through storytelling with inclusiveness and co-creation, that is how it navigates people through complexity at times of crisis.
	Personal agency		
	Discovery of the values		
	Giving meaning to the circumstances		
	Self and external discoveries		
	Minding what the context is	Role of the Facilitator	Context that the AI implementation is happening is everything and the role of facilitator to mind that context is crucial.
	Flexibility to modify the practice		
	Establishing same quality of relatedness and connectedness with same models but different questions		

Table 6. (continued) Breakdown of the findings to the main research question "How can AI help organizations go through transformational changes during the COVID-19 pandemic?"

Research Question	First Order Category	Second Order Themes	Implications
"Are there any organizational factors that can facilitate the implementation of Appreciative Inquiry during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic?"	Flexibility to change the status quo	Organization's Internal Mindset	The mindset of the organization and the flexibility to change that mindset is a key to survive the crisis.
	Role and approach of the leadership		
	Leaving space for different voices	Effective Communication	Effective communication is the natural recurring effect of AI processes through conversations.
	Shared and collective sense making		
	Conversation based methods of AI (interviews, storytelling etc.)		
	Individuals feeling heard	Organizational Trust	AI uses and engenders high levels of organizational trust.
	Approach of the leadership		
	Rapid Trust		
	Psychological Safety		
	Perceiving crisis as a learning experience	Organizational Resilience	Organizational resilience can be built with the AI mindset.
	Curious and inquirer state of mind		
	Adaptability		
	Additional Findings	Different communication styles	Online AI Implementation Process
Different levels of technological savvy			
Larger & Worldwide groups			
Recording & Archiving			
Financial savings from travel expenses			
Reflection of how to contribute during times of crisis		AI Practitioners' Motivation	The AI community of practice stays together and even closer in times of crisis and by this, a lot of answers to the questions that have never posed before can be explored.
Community inspiring each other			
Reaction from the organizations			

After all these findings, a metaphor can be made as an answer to the main research question: AI in times of tragedy or crisis is like taking a piece of art and reframing it; the art itself does not change just because it was reframed on the outside. The practice shifts. Therefore, one powerful conclusion is that the principles or implementation processes do not really change; there are aspects to give more attention to or to spend more time around, how to invite people changes, the role of a facilitator changes and has great significance but the core of appreciative inquiry holds across the ordinary, the extraordinary and the tragedy with the incorporation of effective communication, organizational trust and the act of organizational resilience.

The results agree and build on existing evidence from the literature that AI is of help to organizations to navigate through change and crisis. All the aforementioned findings in this study show the ways in which AI manages that (e.g. mindset it carries, generative questions) and what carries the most importance when the theory is being applied to practice (e.g. the facilitator minding the context and being flexible with the models, inclusiveness). The findings also shed light on the most relevant aspects and theories from the AI literature when used both during and without a crisis scenario. The main takeaways to name as significant implications for the practitioners are the shift in the generative questions to acknowledge the situation and the flexibility in practice especially with the online methods. As for the organizations, the important implications are to be aware of the mindset they carry, realize what the meanings of effective communication and trust look like within that organization and have the adaptability to gain resilience through learning experiences. For those, AI processes are excellent practices to consult.

For all the aforementioned practical implications and theoretical contributions of this study, these novel findings should certainly be taken into account when considering how to use AI not only when applied during a crisis but also whenever a change process in a human system needs to be facilitated.

Limitations & Recommendations

Although this study acknowledges the fact that not everyone is impacted by the crisis of COVID-19 pandemic the same way, such as the internet accessibility in the world or threats for the health the same way, the generalizability of the results is limited by considering the people with at least the bare minimum access to the internet to be able to connect with the rest of the world of lockdown. However, inclusiveness is an important factor for AI. Therefore, further studies on how to manage internet accessibility issues can contribute to this study and play a complementary role in the generalizability of the findings.

Another limitation of this study is that the focus and approach are on the AI practitioners' side. There has been no examination on the side of the organizational members and how they would perceive the questions of this research. So this is an area for opportunity to explore AI practice during a crisis on the side of the organizational members. The findings of such research would have complementary properties to this study when the results are compared and presented in which areas they are aligned and which areas they differ.

Other areas of opportunity are to discover in the future what steps of AI practices are to be held online and for which intentional reasons it becomes necessary to come together face-to-face. As mentioned in all of the interviews in this study, the future will hold a combination of both in-person and digital ways of having an AI practice. It is, however, still a question to be answered how exactly to combine the two ways, which parts to leave out for face-to-face practice and which parts for the online, what can be the reasons to intentionally choose to perform a practice either online or face-to-face and in which kinds of cases it is better to do online over face-to-face and in which cases it is vice versa. Seeking some answers to these questions could contribute to the world of AI practice big time as it implies supporting practitioners to make mindful choices after the COVID-19 pandemic is behind.

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Appendix. Interview Guide

Below is the interview guide that was used for the majority of the participants. For some participants some questions were edited to hear out more about their area of work and expertise.





INTERVIEW GUIDE

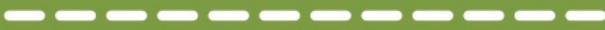
APPLICATION OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

INTERVIEWER: MELISA YILDIZ

University of Hasselt
Faculty of Business Economics
Master of Management



INTRODUCTION



Although there have been numerous studies conducted for crisis management and for the topic of AI separately, this area has missing or insufficient information which limits the ability to draw concrete conclusions on how AI can work as a support mechanism during a crisis (i.e. what features of AI to focus on, the implementation process, which organizational factors to draw strength from). The existing literature with the contribution of Cooperrider (2018) suggest that in a deeper and more complex level of AI, it can be used in the core of a tragedy. However there is a gap to know how exactly this complex level of AI works. Therefore, the goals of this study are to investigate this level of AI, how it can support organizations in a worldwide crisis (namely COVID-19 pandemic). To address these gaps, the main research question that will be in mind is “How can appreciative inquiry (AI) help organizations go through transformational changes during the COVID-19 pandemic?” with the subquestions:

- 1. Which features of appreciative inquiry can be particularly useful in a time of a worldwide crisis?**
- 2. How can appreciative inquiry implementation processes (e.g. 4D cycle) be modified to meet the current situation of the world after the COVID-19 pandemic?**
- 3. Are there any organizational factors that can facilitate the implementation of AI during this crisis?**

Therefore, this interview will have 3 main parts which focus on these 3 subquestions.



PART 1: WHICH FEATURES OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY CAN BE USEFUL IN A TIME OF A WORLDWIDE CRISIS?



1- What do you think about the effects of COVID-19 pandemic, a crisis that affects the human systems by threatening their health, on organizational development interventions?

2- Cooperrider and Fry (2020) believe that while the organizations have to go through a transformation at this period, AI can be of help. Based on your experiences as an expert in this field, to what extent would you agree/disagree with this?



4- Do you have any recommendation for a new addition or modification to existing principles or characteristics of AI for when applied during a crisis?

3- Cooperrider and Srivastva's study back in 1987 presents us the principles of AI.

- The first principle says that AI should start with appreciation, by bringing the best experiences to the surface. What effects do you think a global pandemic might have on this principle? Do you think of any challenges for this principle?
- Another principle of AI is that it should be applicable. With this pandemic, the entire world entered such an uncertain period regarding the working styles, conversion to digital etc. which all makes it harder to predict the applicability. Which characteristics of AI do you think can help manage the issue of the heightened need for certainty with this global pandemic?
- Next principle that AI embodies is that it should be provocative and mobilize people towards the goal of an ideal organization. How can we evaluate this key characteristic for an organizational intervention, during such a crisis where everyone had to stay at home all the time and many were unmotivated?



PART 2: HOW CAN APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES (E.G. 4D CYCLE) BE MODIFIED TO MEET THE CURRENT SITUATION OF THE WORLD WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

1- With the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has become more and more dependent on the technological developments that enable remote coworking. Luckily, AI can easily be done via teleconferencing the same way it can be done face-to-face since the focus is the mutual collaboration and co-creation of people. But what kinds of different outcomes can an online AI summit have than a face-to-face one?

2- What can be the best practices to incorporate technology solutions with the implementation/facilitation process of AI?

3- Cooperrider and Whitney in 1999 presented the model of 4D Cycle.

- Whitney and Cooperrider believe that the choice of the affirmative topic is the core of AI as it is the most important part of any AI undertaking and that the very first questions which are asked contain the seeds of change. Do you think it was more difficult for individuals to perceive and accept such affirmative topics during a crisis?
- The first phase that comes is Discovery. As described by Verleysen and colleagues in 2014, in this phase, people are engaged in the discovery of best of the past experiences to understand energy-giving factors of success. How can this step be modified to catalyze the discovery of the energy-giving factors?
- The second phase is Dream. Cooperrider & Whitney (1999) put it, an artist's imagination and creativity are not inflamed by looking for "what is wrong with this picture" but getting inspired by those things worth valuing and appreciating. How can this step be strengthened to draw the focus from what crisis is taking away from the organization but rather putting it on how this can be an inspirational factor for the organization?
- Next step is to Design. As Cooperrider and Godwin (2011) put it, organizations are there to serve a life-enriching purpose and to accomplish things individual sets of strengths can not accomplish alone. This puts the emphasis on the "togetherness". With a crisis where the individuals felt the need for connection the most, this phase has a potential to be one of the most challenging ones. What can be done in this step to address the need of connection and therefore serve the goal of co-constructing an ideal organization?
- Do you have an overall recommendation on how this model can be improved for a crisis situation?

PART 3: ARE THERE ANY ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS THAT CAN FACILITATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AI DURING THIS CRISIS?

1- Cooperrider (2012) states that there are several factors for AI to be successful in organizations. These can be reversing the 80/20 rule to reverse the deficit bias, having set a purpose bigger than the system itself, wholeness of the individuals coming together, having a climate fertile for innovation to emerge from everywhere and having a growth mindset. What other success factors do you think can be added/removed for an organization considering a crisis? Or what are the conditions for an organization to be considered successful with a crisis situation?

2- According to Fielding (2006), effective communication is essential for all organizations to survive. Effective communication for organizations can be defined as a transaction where the participants create meaning collaboratively by exchanging verbal, non-verbal and graphic sources. Fielding stresses the fact that effective communication demands people working together to make sure that the meaning created together is the same for everyone. Carrol and Hatakenaka (2001) tackle the importance of communication as a factor that affects and assists the organizations when faced with a crisis. Can the organizational factor of effective communication be correlated with AI as a facilitation tool for the implementation during a crisis?

3- According to Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis & Winograd (2000), organizational trust is the expectations the individuals build over the networks of organizational relationships and behaviours. Individuals within an organization concurrently form perceptions of personal and organizational trust. Carrol and Hatakenaka (2001) point out that this organizational trust which is constructed within an organization backed up by (previously mentioned) effective communication factors is another organizational factor that plays a key role in facilitating processes. What are your thoughts on this, how can organizational trust be established and enhanced when in a crisis situation?

4- As Annarelli & Nonino (2016) put, organizational resilience is the capability to resist and respond flexibly to disruptive events such as shocks or disasters that affect the organizations or a system internally or externally and to recover from it, or in other words, to successfully bounce back from it in terms of coming back to the original state or to a new desired state. Cooperrider and Fry (2020) state that corporate culture and values can be extended into an enhanced “new normal” by the developmental act of gaining resilience. This is a statement which Dirani and colleagues support (2020). How can we make a link between organizational resilience and the practice of AI during a crisis?



EXTRA PART: "CRITIQUE"

Now that AI is being considered to be applied with a crisis situation faced, a possible area that can receive critique is the difficulty in reinforcing generativity and affirmative topics despite the negative and hopeless environment during such a disaster/crisis. Besides the participants of an AI practice, another difficulty could be on the AI facilitators' side, to keep themselves motivated despite the situation. How did/can you keep the motivation high both from the participants' and facilitators' perspective?

CLOSURE



Any questions?

Thank you!

