

Kaley Casagrande

AI Project Reflection

Organizational Behavior Section 2

10 December 2021

As a part of my Organizational Behavior class at Muhlenberg College the Fall semester of my senior year, I participated in an Appreciative Inquiry Project with three other group members over the course of the semester. Within this particular project, each group was told to focus on the concept of “resilience”, specifically throughout the pandemic, and what that meant for a particular group who we chose to interview. While each group took their own twist on resilience, our group decided to take a look at resilience across different industries. Through the course of the semester, the goal would be to each interview 5 people from our individual industry, and based on the data we all collected, build a theory of resilience and essentially cultivate this into a final presentation and paper. It was a semester-long process of schedule making, conducting interviews, and reading “The Power of Appreciative Inquiry” along with some readings on resilience to help us build our theory and understand our own industries better. Though the group work sometimes presented itself with some minor issues, I am proud of our own resilience as a team to work together and cultivate a project that we can all be proud of.

My team chose to focus on the dance, auditing, law, and science industries. Right off the bat we knew that these were all very different industries and we were extremely interested in how we could find similarities and differences within them. As a dance major and dancer myself, I interviewed three dance professors as well as two dance studio owners and professionals. A teammate of mine soon to be employed at Deloitte interviewed auditors, his future job, and same with my other teammate going into Law School next Fall, she interviewed five lawyers. My last teammate was interested in how different perspectives scientists may have as compared to the

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rest of our interviewees, so he interviewed five Muhlenberg College science professors.

Questions we asked included, “How has the COVID-19 pandemic forced you to adapt and innovate?”, “How did you overcome a period of extreme pressure?”, and “Has there been a time where you were working towards a goal that you did not achieve? How did you move on?” We used these questions, along with six more to get insights into these industries through one of, if not the hardest time our interviewees have faced in their professional life. Our process was extremely insightful, I learned things about interviewees that I was close with that I would have never known if not for sitting down and having these conversations with them. Our group's five major themes across our findings were: 1. Stability in personal life 2. Having a supportive professional network 3. Maintaining a positive attitude, even during periods of extreme stress 4. Recognizing that goals can be achieved if you don't quit during times of stress because it is worth it in the long run 5. Don't take negative feedback personally, maintain a growth mindset and realize that there is opportunity to learn.

Though we faced slight challenges as a team such as disagreements on how to present our findings, we worked collaboratively and cohesively. Communication, listening especially, was most important- hearing each other's concerns, as well as ideas is what allowed us to find a middle ground when developing our paper and presentation for the course. We respected each other, and because of this were able to each grow individually as professionals as well as find growth as team members and team players. I can confidently say that I am a good team member and will continue to work well in teams as I move forward in my professional career. Finally, to

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end off I am going to leave our team's Theory of Resilience below that we carefully developed over the course of this semester and our Appreciative Inquiry Project.

### Our Team's Theory of Resilience

Resilience is an acquired characteristic. The social bonds and psychological tactics that strengthen individuals and teams during periods of adversity can be learned or developed. Strong social bonds are important to both individual and team resilience. Individuals require a stable personal life and a supportive professional network to maximize their focus on overcoming adversity. Teams and organizations benefit from social cohesion that enhances their collective ability to push through hardship. Resilient individuals harness a positive attitude, a willingness to make short term sacrifices for long term benefit, and maintenance of a growth mindset. Such psychological tactics are vital to empowering individuals to bend but not break and potentially grow from adverse experiences.