



SCHOOL of
GRADUATE STUDIES
EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

East Tennessee State University
**Digital Commons @ East
Tennessee State University**

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Student Works

5-2018

Thriving in a Fortune 500 Company: A Case Study of Grit, Resilience, and Employee Perceptions

April Pack

East Tennessee State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Pack, April, "Thriving in a Fortune 500 Company: A Case Study of Grit, Resilience, and Employee Perceptions" (2018). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 3380. <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/3380>

This Dissertation - Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Works at Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. For more information, please contact digilib@etsu.edu.

Thriving in a Fortune 500 Company: A case study of Grit, Resilience, and Employee Perceptions

A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

April V. Pack

May 2018

Dr. Bethany Flora, Chair

Dr. Bill Flora

Dr. Pamela Scott

Dr. Joe Sherlin

Keywords: Grit, Resilience, Thriving, Growth mindset, Corporate leadership, Corporate employees

ABSTRACT

Thriving in a Fortune 500 Company: A case study of Grit, Resilience, and Employee Perceptions

by

April V. Pack

A qualitative case study was conducted to document 12 employees' perceptions of thriving in a Fortune 500 Company. The case study enabled the researcher to explore the perceptions of thriving among employees with varying levels of grit and resilience using maximum variation sampling strategy. The grit and resilience of these employees had been previously measured through a 14-item Adversity Quotient (AQ) Profile and a 10-item Grit Gauge (GG) assessment. Through analysis of interviews, concept maps, and a ranking exercise the researcher was able to identify the most critical factors that lead to thriving in the Fortune 500 Company. The factors include: positive connections, support of family, support of co-workers and others, shared passion, a sense of resolve and determination, and time for self and others. Additional findings from the research were documented and recommendations were made for leaders of corporate organizations and for further research.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my deceased father Dallas Viles and my deceased grandparents, Paul and Alma Pack.

This research is dedicated to my father for being my biggest fan and supporter and teaching me how important it is to work hard and never give up pursuing the things that are important to you, even when things get tough.

This research is dedicated to my grandparents for demonstrating a life filled with grit and resilience and providing the best example to my husband and me and our children of what it means to make the most of the talents and abilities given to you by God despite your circumstances. They used their talents and abilities to live an abundant life, full of love, in service to others and they not only survived but thrived.

My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor and some style.

- MAYA ANGELOU

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge and appreciate the support I have received from many people while I have been completing the doctoral program. I have learned so much throughout this journey and I have many people to thank. I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to the following individuals:

My family first and foremost have supported my work. My husband, Dr. Robert Pack has provided on-going support, motivation, words of wisdom, and understanding when the house was not clean, the laundry undone and when we had to order takeout for dinner. He is my best friend and my rock solid partner. My children Cannon, Cooper, and Carolina have provided me encouragement and understanding; and have given me space when I needed to get homework and assignments completed. I love them more than words can express.

My dissertation chair, Dr. Bethany Flora, helped me develop, define, and narrow my research topic, provided words of encouragement, believed in me throughout the program and the dissertation process, and worked hard to provide the best feedback possible. I admire her so much. My dissertation committee provided feedback, coaching, and advice along the way and supported my research, this included, Dr. William Flora, Dr. Pamela Scott, and Dr. Joe Sherlin.

My work team and my manager have inspired me, motivated me, supported me, and helped me take the time I needed to complete my research.

My friends the Johnson City Housewives helped me have fun, relax, and enjoy time away from my homework and assignments. They supported my decision to go back for my doctorate and had patience with me when I wasn't available to join in their fun.

My God gave me the skills, abilities, grit, and resilience needed to complete the work required to obtain my doctoral degree. I am blessed daily.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	2
DEDICATION	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	9
Statement of the Problem	11
Research Questions	12
Significance of the Study	13
Definition of Terms	14
Limitations and Delimitations	15
Overview of the Study	16
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	18
Grit and Resilience as a Predictor of Success and Achievement	18
Facilitating Growth of Grit and Resilience in Students and Corporate Employees	21
Students	22
Corporate Employees	23
Linkages of Grit, Resilience, and Thriving	25
Thriving as a Predictor of Success and Retention	26
Thriving in Health and Education Settings	28
Thriving in the Corporate World	30
Chapter Summary	33

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	35
Qualitative Design	35
Tradition Overview	36
Role of the Researcher	37
Ethics	38
Setting	38
Sample	39
Sampling Method	40
Data Collection Procedures	40
Data Analysis	42
Data Presentation	43
4. FINDINGS	45
Introduction	45
Participant Profiles	46
Low Grit and Resilience Scores	47
Medium Low Grit and Resilience Scores	48
Medium High Grit and Resilience Scores	49
High Grit and Resilience Scores	50
Researcher’s Notes and Memos	51
Interview Analysis	55
Interview Results	55
Research Question 1	56
Research Question 2	63

Research Question 3	70
Chapter Summary	77
5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	78
Summary	78
Conclusions	79
General Interview Questions	80
Research Question 1	81
Research Question 2	84
Research Question 3	86
Implications for Practice	87
Implications for Future Research	89
REFERENCES	91
APPENDICES	99
Appendix A: 14 Item Adversity Quotient (AQ) Profile	99
Appendix B: 10 Item Grit Gauge (GG)	100
Appendix C: Participant Interview Protocol and Questions	102
Appendix E: Social Artifact Exercise 1: Concept Map	104
Appendix F: Social Artifact Exercise 2: Ranking Exercise	105
Appendix G: Research Blueprint	106
Appendix H: Ranking Exercise Results	107
VITA	108

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The State of American Workplace Report identified that 70% of workers in the United States (U.S) are not satisfied in the workplace; these employees are emotionally disconnected from their work environment and are less productive than their engaged peers (Gallup, 2012). Corporate leaders are seeking ways to improve turnover rates, engagement, and productivity within the workforce (Wanburg & Banas, 2000). Additionally, workplace environments continue to face rapid changes that can be observed through increases in restructuring, due to issues of economic uncertainty (Gallup, 2012).

Resilience is defined as the process of growing during a disruptive, stressful, or challenging life event in a way that provides the individual with skills that did not exist prior to the disruptive event (Richardson, Neiger, Jensen, & Kumpfer, 1990). Individuals who are resilient are able to sustain performance and recover quickly from negative circumstances (Davis, Luecken, & Lemery-Chalfant, 2009). Grit is defined as the demonstration of perseverance and passion in pursuit of a long-term goal (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). Individuals demonstrating grit are more likely to be engaged with their work than other individuals (Suzuki, Tamesue, Asahi, & Ishikawa, 2015). Thus, building the attributes of resilience and grit in employees is an important factor that increases adaptability to change and creates a thriving and productive workforce (Lewis, 2014).

The attributes of resilience and grit are important determinants of success and are associated with adaptive, productive, and engaged organizations (Strycharczyk & Elvin, 2014). Resilience and grit are better trait predictors of success than social intelligence, good looks,

physical health, or intelligence quotient (Duckworth, 2016). Many teachers are now working to teach resilience and grit to their students to improve both grade point averages (GPAs) and graduation rates (Cassidy, 2015; Dweck, Walton, & Cohen, 2014).

Dweck (2006) asserts that resilience and grit are dynamic as opposed to static traits; these attributes in a person can deplete or grow based on the mindset of the individual. Organizational scholars are likewise studying resilience and grit in business and industry settings. Researcher and author Peter Clough describes the type of grit and resilience needed for organizations in the 21st century as, “the difference between gritting your teeth in the face of adversity and change and welcoming change and embracing all opportunities in a tough situation” (Strycharczyk & Clough, 2014, p. 1).

In addition to grit and resilience, the topic of thriving has been researched extensively in the discipline of higher education. Schreiner (2010) defined thriving as, “being fully engaged emotionally, socially and intellectually and experiencing a sense of psychological well-being and community that contributes to success and persistence” (p. 4). Schreiner (2010) linked the topic of thriving and greater psychological well-being to academic success and higher graduation rates for college students (Schriener, 2010). Thriving is a distinct construct that includes, (1) engaged learning, (2) academic determination, (3) positive perspective, (4) diverse citizenship, and (5) social connectedness. These constructs were used to develop interventions in higher education that led to improvements in educational environments where students not only survived, but thrived. These interventions focused on individual students, the classroom experiences, and in the development of programs available at educational institutions (Schriener, 2010).

In addition to research on thriving in higher education settings, other scholars have examined the concept of thriving within corporate settings (Carucci, 2015; Spreitzer & Porath, 2012). The financial influence of thriving employees is significant; in an organization with 1,000 workers, thriving employees cost their employers \$1.8 million *less* every year (Robison, 2010). Despite the importance of thriving, corporate leaders in organizations are not providing thriving conditions for their employees (Carucci, 2015).

There is a paucity of empirical research surrounding the link between the traits of resilience and grit within the construct of thriving. Data from recent studies may be used to develop correlations between the traits of grit and resilience with student success, professionalism, and the construct of thriving (Arouty, 2015; Broering-Jacobs, 2016; Schreiner, 2010). More research is needed to understand the corporate experience for employees with differing grit and resilience levels; particularly, little research exists that provides a rich description of how employees thrive in the workplace.

Statement of the Problem

Organizations with thriving employees are more successful organizations (Diner & Seligman, 2004; Rosales, 2017). Few research studies have examined the traits of grit and resilience as they relate to the construct of thriving at work. One way to examine how employees thrive professionally is to select individuals with differing levels of grit and resilience and develop a line of inquiry about what it means to thrive at work. A case study of individuals working within the same corporate organization but possessing differing levels of grit and resilience will provide rich insight into workplace perceptions of thriving within that unique organization. These results will be useful for training, professional development, and

advancement within the organization and can be transferred with case contextual consideration for use by organizational scholars such as organizational psychologists, workplace climate researchers, and scholars engaged in the study of non-cognitive attributes of success. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative case study is to describe the ability to thrive at work for current employees in a Fortune 500 company in New Jersey. For the purpose of the study, ability to thrive at work was defined as:

- 1) Individual factors related to a growth mindset and positive perspective at work (Dweck, 2006; Schreiner, 2010);
- 2) Relational factors related to social connectedness and professional network (Schreiner, 2010); and,
- 3) Organizational factors related to engaged learning through professional development opportunities, coaching, feedback, defined purpose, and well-being (Schreiner, 2010; Spreitzer & Porath, 2012; Spreitzer & Sutcliffe, 2007).

Research Questions

The following overarching research questions guided the study:

1. How do participants describe the individual factors that relate to their ability to thrive at work?
2. What relational factors do participants describe as important for their ability to thrive at work?
3. How do participants describe the organizational factors that relate to their ability to thrive at work?

Significance of the Study

“Seventy-five percent of middle managers in the U.S. have opted for peace and pay” (Quinn, 1996, p. 20). Peace and pay is when an employee works only to maintain the status quo, keeps his or her head down throughout the day, arrives at 9 and leaves by 5, and is risk averse (Quinn, 1996). This type of behavior is detrimental to an organization. According to the Gallup Organization disengaged employees cost the U.S. an estimated 500 billion dollars over the past 15 years (Adkins, 2015).

Engaged employees who are thriving at work are more productive, show up for work on time each day, go above and beyond the call of duty, attract other committed employees, and possess a long-term commitment to the organization (Spreitzer & Porath, 2012). Additionally, managers of thriving employees reported that thriving employees perform 16% better overall than other employees. In the study thriving employees self-reported 125% less burnout than their colleagues and expressed a higher level of commitment to the organization and greater satisfaction levels with their jobs (Spreitzer & Porath, 2012).

The present research study is significant in that it builds upon the body of knowledge regarding corporate employees who demonstrate grit and resiliency and seeks to understand how employees with varying levels of grit and resilience scores describe their ability to thrive in the work environment. In addition, the results of this study provide insights related to the development of interventions that foster the mindset expanding traits of grit and resilience and therefore improve the percentage of employees who are thriving in the work environment of a corporate organization.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this study:

1. Adversity Quotient (AQ) Profile. The AQ is an, “oppositional, scale-based, forced-choice questionnaire designed to gauge an individual’s resilience — that is, his or her capacity to respond constructively to difficulties — by eliciting his or her hardwired response pattern to a broad range of adverse events” (Stoltz, 1997, p. 9).
2. Concept. A concept is used for the development of a concept map in research - a main idea that is designated by a chosen word (Novak & Canas, 2008; Novak & Gowin, 1984).
3. Concept map. Concept maps are graphical tools used to demonstrate knowledge between concepts through propositions and meaningful relationships that can be arranged in hierarchical order with the inclusive concepts at the top and less inclusive concepts arranged at the bottom (Novak & Canas, 2008; Novak & Gowin, 1984).
4. Grit. Grit is defined as perseverance and passion in pursuit of a long-term goal (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007).
5. Grit Gauge (GG). The present study included participant results from the 10-item Grit Gauge (GG) where grit was defined as, “The capacity to dig deep and do whatever it takes—even sacrifice, struggle, and suffer—to achieve the most worthy goals in the best ways” (Stoltz, 2015, p. 49).
6. Growth mindset. Growth mindset is defined as a mindset that will perceive a challenge as an opportunity to learn rather than an obstacle to overcome (Dweck, 2006).
7. Resilience. Resilience is defined as the process of growing during a disruptive, stressful, or challenging life event in a way that provides the individual with skills that did not exist prior to the disruptive event (Richardson, Neiger, Jensen, & Kumpfer, 1990).

8. Thriving. Schreiner (2010) defined thriving as, “being fully engaged emotionally, socially and intellectually and experiencing a sense of psychological well-being and community that contributes to success and persistence” (p. 4).
9. Thriving Factors. The present research study included the following defined factors of thriving: 1) individual factors related to a growth mindset and positive perspective at work (Dweck, 2006; Schreiner, 2010); 2) relational factors related to social connectedness and professional network (Schreiner, 2010); and, 3) organizational factors related to engaged learning through professional development opportunities, coaching, feedback, defined purpose, and well-being (Schreiner, 2010; Spreitzer & Porath, 2012; Spreitzer & Sutcliffe, 2007).

Limitations and Delimitations

Every study, no matter how well it is developed and conducted, has limitations (Simon & Goes, 2013). Research studies have limitations that are out of the control of the researcher and also delimitations that the researcher can control (Patton, 2002). There were three main limitations and two delimitations in the present study related to grit, resilience, and thriving in a corporate setting.

The first limitation was the appropriateness of the definition and the constructs used to measure and describe thriving. The researcher assumed that the constructs of grit, resilience, and thriving have been empirically measured and adopted two instruments for sorting and selecting individuals in the interviews. The instruments used to measure grit and resiliency had been administered to employees prior to the present study; the corporation deemed the tools as valid and reliable instruments, and results were used to select individuals to participate in this case study. It is possible that different grit and resilience inventories would have yielded different

results thereby placing individuals into different categories for the maximum variation sampling strategy. Additionally, this study relied upon the use of self-reported data from the participants who agreed to be in the study. Therefore, the trustworthiness of findings is dependent on levels of self-awareness, openness, and honesty of study participants. It was further assumed that the participants responded to the prescreening grit and resilience instruments honestly, as well as provided honest answers during the interviews.

This study was delimited to participants in a single corporate organization who previously participated in the completion of the 14 item Adversity Quotient (AQ) Profile and the 10 item Grit Gauge (GG). Employees who had not completed both instruments were excluded from the option to participate. Additionally, participants who volunteered to be part of this research study had also received their AQ and GG scores prior to the interviews. One delimiting factor could be selection bias where participants in the organization who perceived their scores to be above average with regard to resiliency and grit were more likely to volunteer to participate in the interviews. The results of this qualitative case study are not generalizable and care should be taken when transferring findings from this study to other employees within the organization or to other corporate settings. Despite these limitations and delimitations, this research is important to expand the field of scholarship related to understanding linkages between grit, resiliency and thriving within corporate settings.

Overview of the Study

This study includes five chapters. Chapter 1 establishes the need and importance of this study by including an introduction to the study, a statement of the problem, research questions related to the purpose, significance of the study, definition of relevant terms used within the research, and limitations and delimitations of the study. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature

related to the concepts of grit, resiliency, and the linkages to thriving in both higher education and in corporate organizations. This chapter includes six research areas as follows: Grit and Resilience as a Predictor of Success and Achievement, Facilitating Growth of Grit and Resilience, Thriving in Health and Education Settings, Thriving as a Predictor of Success and Retention, Linkages of Grit, Resilience and Thriving, and Thriving in the Corporate World. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology including the instruments, participants, collection of data and data analysis. Chapter 4 is the presentation of data, including findings from the interviews, concept map, rating exercise, and coding of data. Chapter 5 is the summary of the research, conclusions, identified interventions, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to describe the ability to thrive at work for current employees in a Fortune 500 company in New Jersey. For the purpose of the study, ability to thrive at work was defined as: 1) individual factors related to a growth mindset and positive perspective at work (Dweck, 2006; Schreiner, 2010); 2) relational factors related to social connectedness and professional network (Schreiner, 2010); and, 3) organizational factors related to engaged learning through professional development opportunities (Schreiner, 2010; Spreitzer & Porath, 2012). In the synthesis and analysis of relevant literature examining grit and resiliency and the connection of these characteristics to thriving, the following themes within the related fields of research emerged: Grit and Resilience as a Predictor of Success and Achievement, Facilitating Growth of Grit and Resilience in Students and Corporate Employees, Linkages of Grit, Resilience and Thriving, Thriving as a Predictor of Success and Retention, Thriving in Health and Education Settings, and Thriving in the Corporate World.

Grit and Resilience as a Predictor of Success and Achievement

Grit is a predictor of academic success and achievement in various studies. “Why do some individuals accomplish more than others of equal intelligence?” (Duckworth, et al., 2007, p. 1087). In answer to the question of why some people achieve more, while others do not, even when all things are equal Duckworth et al. (2007) argued that there are some characteristics common among all successful people and one of these characteristics is grit. Duckworth developed and validated a self-report instrument called the Grit Scale. The scale was used in six different studies to associate grit with factors such as educational attainment, age, cumulative

grade point average (GPA), retention during basic training at West Point, graduation rates for West Point, and advancement to higher rounds in the National Spelling Bee. The results of these six studies found grit to be a significant variable in success outcomes (Duckworth et al., 2007). Specifically, in the West Point study Duckworth and Quinn (2009) analyzed data from 1,248 cadets and found that grit predicted completion of the academy's rigorous summer training program better than the Whole Candidate Index. The Whole Candidate Index is comprised of: one's weighted high school rank, SAT score, involvement, and physical exercise evaluation. This index is used for admission into West Point. The researchers concluded that "grittier West Point cadets were less likely to drop out during their first summer of training" (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009, p. 173).

In another study the influence of grit and resilience was examined related to the success of doctoral students in an online program. Success was measured using three criteria: number of courses completed, current GPA, and the completion of a dissertation defense (Cross, 2013). Cross found a significant positive correlation between grit and resilience and the GPA of female students and positive correlation between grit and age. Cross concluded that older female students possessed the highest levels of grit and resilience and the greatest success rate in the online doctoral program overall.

Student academic performance has been found to be the best indicator of student graduation rates. The factors of grit and resilience were analyzed to determine whether these traits may also significantly predict first-year academic performance. Chang studied whether grit and resilience would predict academic performance over other predictors such as gender, race, high school GPA, and standardized admission (ACT/SAT) test scores (Chang, 2014). Findings

included that the trait of persistence, as a subset of grit, was statistically significant with first year GPA of students over and above all predictor variables.

Strayhorn (2014) studied the importance of grit in predicting grades of black males attending a predominantly white educational institution. Black males leave higher education before completing the degree at a rate much higher than black females and all other races (National Urban League, 2007). This research represented an important extension of grit research in predicting academic success for black male college students. Prior research had examined grit for other samples such as adolescents, females, and adults. Strayhorn concluded that “counselors might do well to consider formulating policies that incorporate non-cognitive assessments, such as Grit-S, in addition to traditional admission criteria (e.g., GPA, ACT), especially if such policies are designed to recruit racially diverse students who will earn good grades in college” (Strayhorn, 2014 p. 7).

In terms of success in business and the corporate world related to grit and resilience, minimal research exists. In a study of 328 corporate leaders, Parthasarathy and Chakraborty (2014) found that grit emerged as a dominant trait among a list of important leadership traits leading to success. The authors recommended that grit should be measured in potential leaders as a part of the hiring process to serve as a filter to enable the success of a new leader. This study serves to extend research regarding grit as an essential leadership trait in the corporate world.

Stoltz (2015) conducted a study including 684 global leaders. Grit emerged as the most important trait in achieving success in leaders’ response to more difficult and complex assignments and the more tasks to complete (Stoltz, 2015). In an interview Dr. Stoltz made the following statement regarding grit, “We live in uncertain and adversity rich times, therefore,

leaders are required to possess and lead with exceptional grit and resilience to produce impressive results in such challenging contexts” (Arceo-Dumlao, 2016, p.6).

In addition to the research related to grit, Stoltz developed the Adversity Quotient (AQ) Profile. The AQ Profile is a statistically valid and reliable tool used to measure and assess resilience. The tool is currently used at Harvard for both the Business School Executive Development Program and the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program (Cogswell, 2016). The profile has been used with over 500,000 people globally. The tool is used most often for recruitment and selection of the most resilient employees. Hiring the most resilient employees has helped organizations minimize the risk and expense associated with new hire turnover (Venkatesh & Shivaranjani, 2015). Each of these studies demonstrates how the traits of grit and resilience are important in predicting success, whether pursuing a degree, completing basic training at West Point, participating in a Spelling Bee, beginning a new job or leading a corporate organization. As the traits of grit and resilience are highly desirable, companies and organizations are seeking ways to facilitate the growth of grit and resilience in others.

Facilitating Growth of Grit and Resilience in Students and Corporate Employees

Some students are simply not satisfied with good grades and want to continue to understand, learn, and succeed. Deliberate practice is used by these students to help improve, achieve, and pursue ambitious goals. Additionally, leaders in corporate organizations are facing stressful demands and being asked to prevail amongst chaos. In order to continue to lead organizations successfully, corporate leaders are challenged to build new skills including grit and resilience. Grit and resilience are traits demonstrated through research to be critical for student success and retention and for corporate leaders to be able to succeed despite the fast pace of

change; therefore, facilitating growth of grit and resilience in both students and corporate employees is essential.

Students

While recent research has been used to demonstrate that grit matters for success in life, little is known about how to best foster grit. Duckworth said, “I think grit can be taught, but I don't think we have enough evidence to know with certainty that we can. Part of the problem is figuring out how to assess grit. These things are really hard to measure with fidelity” (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009, p. 169).

Seligman (2006, 2007) argues that optimism is a skill that can be taught by changing how we view the setbacks we encounter in life. Optimism generates resilience and optimists succeed. Resilience is dependent upon the explanations that people were giving themselves when faced with adversity. Given equal talent and drive, optimists succeed where pessimists are forever apprehensive (Seligman, 2006, 2007).

Dweck described a growth mindset as; “the belief that basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work”, and this is the starting point to build grit and resilience (Dweck, 2006, p.7). Dweck’s studies on growth mindset have shown that individuals who embrace challenges as opportunities to learn, versus as obstacles to overcome, will enable constructive thoughts that yield persistence. This persistence or tenacity has been shown to have a positive impact on academic achievement (Lechner, 2017). Mindset is not a fixed quality but is learned from both experience and instruction. Intervention studies have shown that by teaching a growth mindset important elements such as motivation, perseverance, achievement, and resilience can be increased (Dockterman & Blackwell, 2014).

Several studies have been completed to measure the perceived growth of grit and resilience following participation in programs focused on changing mindsets from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset. Duckworth administered two different surveys to a sample of 45 early and middle adolescents prior to students attending a week-long program and then after attendance. The purpose of the study was to explore the impact of the program on the student's perception of grit and resilience. The surveys used in the study were the Grit Scale (Duckworth, 2007) and the pre and post Resiliency Scale for Children and Adolescents (Prince-Embury, 2008). The results from this mixed method research revealed a statistically significant difference in the student's self-perception of grit preprogram compared to the self-perception of grit post program. Additionally, the results showed significant differences between the student's resilience scores post program versus preprogram, particularly in the areas of optimism, self-efficacy, adaptability, and comfort. The findings from the study supported the tenant that both grit and resilience can be taught (Gamel, 2014).

Corporate Employees

Resilient employees perform well under pressure, deal effectively with change, and do not focus on barriers or failures. Resilient employees look toward the future, maintain their productivity through uncertainty, and have fun despite everyday work life frustrations (Vitality, 2013). Managers have a responsibility to help facilitate resilience among team members. Research from the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) shows the following management actions can build resilience among team members: 1) provide clarity of purpose, 2) nurture trust, 3) understand workload, 4) encourage autonomy, and 5) encourage team cohesion (Vitality, 2013).

There are four stages for facilitating grittiness in individuals. These stages are: interest, practice, purpose, and hope (Duckworth, 2016). Applying these stages as insights into building grit within organizations and teams can create high or improved performance (Duke, 2017). Duke suggests that organizational leaders should recruit or hire people with deep interest in the tasks of the job, establish disciplined practices to ensure that teamwork is accomplished effectively as a team, remind the team or organization of its purpose frequently, and create and celebrate small wins for the organization or team (Duke, 2017).

Milana Hogan, a Chief Legal Recruiting and Professional Development Officer, identified a link between grit and successful female attorneys. This research has been used to develop the Grit Project (Ward, 2017). The Grit Project was created by the American Bar Association (ABA) Commission on Women in the Profession. It was created for bar associations, law firms, corporate legal departments, and women attorneys to provide the resources needed for assessing, training, developing, and educating grit and growth mindset science (Hightman, Hogan, & Larkin-Wong, 2017). Findings indicated a strong statistically significant positive correlation between grit and success in women attorneys from 200 law firms. Findings indicated that grit helps to enable success rather than serves as an outcome of success (Hightman et al., 2017). Additionally, growth mindset characteristics were demonstrated by the most successful women attorneys, especially when they had challenging workplace situations to overcome such as responding to negative feedback, keeping pace with the workload, and the volume of work. This research contributes to the limited research that currently exists regarding the facilitation of growth of grit and resilience in corporate employees and provides another example of how the traits of grit and resilience can predict success over other variables. In

addition to studies about fostering growth and resilience, scholars have examined how the two traits are linked to the construct of thriving.

Linkages of Grit, Resilience, and Thriving

The concept of thriving occurs when a person experiences a traumatic or stressful event in life and gains from the experience by applying that gain to new experiences in a consistent way (Carver, 1998). The nature of this gain is attributed to three conceptualizations that include: skills and knowledge gain, confidence gain, or strengthened personal relations gain (Carver, 1998). Additionally, Carver clarifies a link between grit and resilience to thriving where thriving was recognized as growth that happens in a situation where growth would be unexpected; rather, thriving happens when the opposite of growth would have been the predictable outcome.

A significant positive relationship is established between grit, resilience, and psychological well-being (Vinothkumar & Prasad, 2016). The concepts of well-being and thriving are used synonymously in various studies related to positive psychology (Bergland & Kirkevold, 2001; King & Benson, 2006). Additionally, there are research studies with findings that support a direct relationship between psychological well-being and grit (Salles, Cohen, & Mueller, 2014; Seligman, 2011; Singh & Jha, 2008). Resilience is a predictor of life satisfaction, and people with high levels of grit possess a resilient nature (Vinothkumar & Prasad, 2016). A strong positive correlation was found between grit and resilience which is consistent with a study showing a positive correlation between motivational resilience and engagement in work (Skinner, Pitzer, & Brule, 2014). Identifying linkages between grit, resilience, and thriving are important because it follows that a person's growth in grit and resilience is achieved, that person's ability to thrive can be realized.

The studies of resilience provide greater understanding and insight to the literature of thriving or how human strength comes to life through trials and tribulations. Additionally, linking the concepts of grit, resilience, and thriving provides a way to articulate how some people, despite their trials (or maybe because of them), have the ability to live, work, play, and embrace an abundant life (Ryff & Singer, 2003). Understanding how grit, resiliency, and thriving are linked provides researchers with a basis for articulating some of the human conditions needed to live life abundantly. Thriving has been linked to grit and resilience. Furthermore, the construct of thriving been used to understand the success and retention of college students.

Thriving as a Predictor of Success and Retention

Recent economic challenges in higher education have increased interest in research and interventions or recommendations for improving student retention and improving the overall effectiveness of the educational institution. Institutions of higher education that commit to achieving distinction in student success are more likely to survive, and even thrive, in times of challenging economics (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005). In order for a student to have a successful experience in college, researchers have found it takes more than good grades and graduation. A college student who is thriving experiences a higher level of psychological well-being and a sense of belonging to a community that enables him or her to have persistence to graduate and gain the maximum benefit from the overall college experience (Bean & Eaton, 2000).

Howell (2009), investigated the relationship between flourishing and academic functioning in a study of 397 undergraduate students at a university. Results from the study indicated that flourishing was positively related to academic success (Howell, 2009).

Flourishing research has been studied primarily in medical studies of adolescents and the elderly and the concept of flourishing does not contain academic elements needed to understand college students. Therefore, the term thriving was used to describe what it means to flourish in the context of higher education (Howell, 2009).

Researchers in higher education have conducted numerous studies related to student success and retention. Understanding the reasons students leave prior to graduation and gaining new insights into the factors impacting dropout lead to more focused solutions (Braxton, 2000). Schreiner, Pothoven, Nelson, and McIntosh, (2009) studied thriving as a predictor of success and retention for college students. In this research thriving was explored through three key areas found to contribute to student success and retention: 1) academic engagement and performance, 2) interpersonal relationships, and 3) intrapersonal well-being (Schreiner et al., 2009). The sample included 4,602 college student responses using the Thriving Quotient instrument. Findings indicated that thriving was significantly correlated with several important outcomes including: “intent to graduate, perceived institutional fit, college grades, and willingness to choose the institution again if given the opportunity” (Schreiner et al., 2009, p. 13). The findings were used to confirm that thriving is a predictive construct for identifying the specific experiences leading to student’s success in college.

Researchers have recognized the role that non cognitive psychosocial components contribute to the successful outcome of students (Bowman, 2010; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008; Robbins et al., 2004). These psychosocial components can be developed and applied as workable interventions to enable a higher percentage of college students to succeed and thrive in higher education (Schreiner, McIntosh, Cuevas, & Kalinkewicz, 2013).

An example of a study examining the non-cognitive psychosocial components was conducted by Schreiner et al. in 2013. The researchers tested the psychometric properties of the Thriving Quotient instrument that was developed using both the psychological models of retention (Bean & Eaton, 2000) and theories of flourishing (Keyes & Haidt, 2003). The researchers examined the instrument's reliability and predictive validity for student success in the areas of academic engagement and performance, psychological well-being, and interpersonal relationships (Schreiner et al., 2009). The results of the study to test the psychometric properties of thriving determined that some common campus environment predictors of success, such as student and faculty interactions and student involvement in campus activities, contribute to student success and the ability to thrive in college. The authors concluded that gauging student success solely on common success indicators such as grade point average (GPA), intelligence quotient (I.Q.), or test scores will not capture the full picture of student success nor predict student retention (Schreiner et al., 2013). In addition to studies that use thriving as a predictor of college student success and retention, thriving has also been examined by scholars in other health and education settings such as the college student experience, elderly in nursing homes, and adolescents in development.

Thriving in Health and Education Settings

“Thriving represents the dynamic and bi-directional interplay of a person intrinsically animated and energized by discovering his/her specialness, and the developmental contexts (people, places) that know, affirm, celebrate, encourage, and guide its expression” (Benson & Scales, 2009, p. 87). Thriving in college is defined as being “fully engaged intellectually, socially, and emotionally in the college experience” (Schreiner, 2010, p. 4).

The Thriving Quotient contains five scales. The scales or constructs of thriving are “engaged learning, academic determination, positive perspective, social connectedness, and diverse citizenship” (Schreiner, 2010, p. 1964). Scores from the Thriving Quotient have been used to predict grade point averages, intent to graduate, fit at the institution, overall satisfaction, perception of the value of tuition, and learning gains (Schreiner et al., 2009). Schreiner conceptualized thriving based on the psychological well-being constructs that were recommended from research on flourishing and also added elements critical to success for college students, such as “academic engagement, self-regulated learning, goal-setting, effort regulation, openness to differences, citizenship, and the experience of a psychological sense of community on campus” (Schreiner et al., 2009, p.4).

Other theoretical perspectives and approaches to thriving can be found in the work of researchers Bergland and Kirkevold. These researchers studied three different theoretical perspectives related to thriving among the elderly in nursing homes. These perspectives are: 1) thriving as an outcome of growth and development, 2) thriving as an emotional state, and 3) thriving as an expression of physical health state (Bergland & Kirkevold, 2001). In the study, the link between thriving and resilience highlighted the importance of understanding factors impacting resilience. In terms of choosing the most closely related constructs of the three theoretical approaches for the research, shortcomings were indicated related to the phase of life of the group and the scale of importance of the health related aspects of the participants of the study (Bergland & Kirkevold, 2001). A suggestion for further investigation and study of the most relevant elements related to resilience and thriving for this elderly population was to develop useful concepts and provide recommendations for thriving in this specific nursing home environment.

Scholars have identified five concepts that can be used to describe the characteristics of a positively developing young person (Lerner et al., 2006). When young people demonstrate five characteristics (5 C's) in development, they are considered to be thriving (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003). The five characteristics are cognitive and behavioral competence, confidence, positive social connections, character, and caring (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Examining differences by demographic background led to the conclusion that any attempt to find general indicators of thriving across racial, socioeconomic status, cultural, religious, or ethnic groups may prove to be futile (Lerner et al., 2006). The settings of health education provide rich opportunities to explore the construct of thriving as health and well-being are key foci areas of these settings. Research has also been conducted in corporate settings related to thriving and employee satisfaction.

Thriving in the Corporate World

The right work environment can enable employees to thrive and therefore positively contribute to employee health and well-being (Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2003). Thriving is related to important outcomes for both the individual and for the organization. These outcomes include: self-development, health, performance, contagion to others, and spillover to home life (Spreitzer & Sutcliffe, 2007). Harvard researchers, Spreitzer, and Porath, along with research partners at the Ross School of Business's Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship, worked to find factors that would enable personal performance improvement, along with sustainable organizational performance. The term "thriving workforce" was used to describe employees who went beyond being satisfied and productive (Spreitzer & Porath, 2012, p. 3). These employees were engaged and energized, they avoided personal burnout and worked to develop a plan for the future of the organization. Two components of thriving were identified in the study:

vitality and learning. Vitality was described as, “the sense of being alive, passionate, and excited” (Spreitzer & Porath, 2012, p. 4). Learning was described as the “growth that comes from obtaining new knowledge and skills” (Speitzer & Porath, 2012, p. 4).

Some employees naturally thrive, bringing learning and vitality into work every day. These are the types of employees that organizations should seek out when hiring. Other employees need motivation and inspiration to release and maintain enthusiasm and to thrive. The research was used to identify four methods for developing a thriving work environment. These methods are: empowering employee decision-making, sharing and informing, minimizing discourteous behavior, and providing on-going feedback (Speitzer & Porath, 2012). Each of these methods build on each other and, therefore, work together to enable vitality and learning for an engaged organization. The Gallup Organization found that engaged organizations outperform others in regard to profitability, absenteeism, turnover, productivity, and customer ratings (Rosales, 2017).

Another similar research study, the Kelly Global Workforce Index, brought together insights from over 120,000 respondents representing 31 countries. The study respondents were asked what could be done to help build engagement and thriving at work. The top three responses were (1) more training and development opportunities (53%); (2) more clarification of responsibilities, goals, and objectives (46%); and (3) more transparency in communications (37%) (Kelly Global Workforce Index, 2013).

Empirical research supports the long-term financial benefits of organizations that are comprised of thriving and flourishing employees. People who scored high in well-being earned more income and had better performance at work than people who scored low in well-being. In addition, the high well-being workers were better “organization citizens,” meaning the engaged

behavior of these workers was contagious and inspired others to thrive at work (Diener & Seligman, 2004, p. 7).

Additionally, the science of Positive Organizational Scholarship asserts that corporate organizations can achieve their profit and growth goals by enhancing employee's experience at work (Cameron & Dutton, 2003). It is critical to develop and hire positive leaders in organizations to promote outcomes such as "thriving at work, interpersonal flourishing, virtuous behaviors, positive emotions, and energizing networks" (Cameron, 2012, p. 10). Four critical behaviors are attributed to positive leaders: 1) fostering a positive climate, 2) reinforcing positive meaning, 3) building positive relationships, and 4) engaging in positive communication (Cameron, 2012). Cameron's research supports the need for both positive leadership as well as individual employees who engage in and foster a thriving environment at work.

Learning, accomplishing, and receiving recognition were the most important experiences leading to thriving that can be enabled through positive leadership. In a study of leadership behaviors that result in thriving, the concepts of relationships and support were identified as critical and were enabled through positive leadership (Sonenshein, Dutton, Grant, Speitzer, & Sutcliffe, 2006). The themes provide insight into the behaviors that employers should seek when hiring and the behaviors to emphasize when creating a more engaged workforce.

Organizational research in the past has placed an emphasis on performance outcomes while ignoring the importance of social and public betterment (Walsh, Weber, & Margolis, 2003). Enabling a thriving organization can enhance long-term sustainable performance (Speitzer & Sutcliffe, 2007). Thriving organizations are flexible and can respond appropriately and quickly to uncertainty and chaos. Also, because these organizations are continuously learning, capabilities are built that will enable innovative problem solving and the ability to react

to challenges and crises. Lastly, thriving organizations have healthier employees, therefore reducing overall health care costs (Speitzer & Sutcliffe, 2007).

Chapter Summary

In conclusion, the literature as it relates to grit, resilience, and thriving has several common themes. The first theme is that grit and resilience are important determinants of success for both students in higher education and for employees within corporate organizations. These characteristics have been shown to be better predictors of success than social intelligence, good looks, physical health, or even intelligence quotient (Duckworth, 2016). Corporate organizations have recognized the importance of grit and resilience and many companies are implementing programs to foster these characteristics with employees and leaders (Cameron, 2012). Grit and resilience are traits that apply to college and career settings alike; grit and resilience are skills that are important to build for sustaining performance and fostering productivity over time.

Scholars have correlated the traits of grit and resilience to thriving. This is important because if grit and resilience can be improved, thriving is more easily attained. Leaders within colleges and corporate organizations are working to implement relevant programs and resources and to develop appropriate recruitment and selection criteria as well as support systems that enable students and employees to increase levels of grit and resilience and, therefore, thrive (Ryff & Singer, 2003). A focus on thriving for colleges and universities creates a broader view of student development that includes proactively harnessing the challenges of life, contributing to a greater goal, building healthy relationships, and developing a sense of community (Schriener, 2010).

Researchers exploring thriving in higher education have developed specific constructs related to thriving. These constructs have been used to create thriving assessments as well as

recommendations to create thriving environments for colleges and universities. The Thriving Quotient is one such assessment and includes the scales of engaged learning, academic determination, positive perspective, social connectedness, and diverse citizenship (Schreiner, 2010).

Corporate leaders also desire to create thriving work environments. In these uncertain and chaotic times, the development of a thriving work environment is what enables good companies to be great. A focus on thriving in corporate organizations yields positive productivity improvements and positive economic impact (Speitzer & Sutcliffe, 2007). Specific thriving constructs developed for corporate organizations have not been clearly identified; however, instruments that measure grit and resilience have been used within corporate settings. Therefore, the present research study used two such grit and resilience inventory instruments (Adversity Quotient and Grit Gauge) to select employees in a corporate setting for the purpose of understanding the concept of thriving at work. Thus, the constructs from the higher education literature were used as the conceptual framework to guide inquiry into what it means to thrive in a corporate environment.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to describe the ability to thrive at work for current employees in a Fortune 500 company in New Jersey. For the purpose of the study, ability to thrive at work was defined as: 1) individual factors related to a growth mindset and positive perspective at work (Dweck, 2006; Schreiner, 2010); 2) relational factors related to social connectedness and professional network (Schreiner, 2010); and, 3) organizational factors related to engaged learning through professional development opportunities, coaching, feedback, defined purpose and well-being (Schreiner, 2010; Spreitzer & Porath, 2012; Spreitzer & Sutcliffe, 2007). Therefore, the study was designed to answer the following overarching research questions:

1. How do participants describe the individual factors that relate to their ability to thrive at work?
2. What relational factors do participants describe as important for the ability to thrive at work?
3. How do participants describe the organizational factors that relate to their ability to thrive at work?

Qualitative Design

This qualitative case study facilitates the exploration of human experience, perceptions, and contextual interpretations of the concepts of grit, resilience, and thriving. The design involves gathering data through in-depth interviews and engaging the participants in the completion of two social artifacts exercises. Qualitative research dissects how meaning is

constructed through the interpretation of data and identification of themes (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). The research is focused on self-perceptions of thriving at work in a corporate organization. Participants completed a prescreening consent form that gave the researcher permission to obtain their preexisting grit and resilience scores from previous company employee assessments. The scores were used to create groups for cross-case and within-case analyses of interview and artifact data. While participants were aware of their own grit and resilience scores as they had received feedback from the company related to the surveys, they did not know how their scores compared to others within the company. Further, participants were not informed whether their scores would place them in the higher or lower group for the purpose of this research study. These data were used to better understand the perceptions of thriving at work and to understand thematic commonalities as well as any common differences between employee perceptions of thriving at work when using the constant-comparative method to analyze transcripts and concept maps between individuals who had lower grit and resilience scores to those with higher grit and resilience scores. As a qualitative inquiry, one purpose was to understand whether there were thematic differences between the two groups as a key to understanding the concept of thriving at work.

Tradition Overview

This research used a case study approach. The case study design enables boundaries to be set and for those boundaries to be the central focus in the research. Additionally, this approach allows for a deeper understanding of the complexity of the issues of grit, resilience, and thriving in a single corporate organization. Case study allows the researcher to investigate relationships, communities, or programs and supports the dissection and then possible recreation of various phenomena (Yin, 2003). Reporting of the case study allows the researcher to take

complex phenomena and describe them in a way that is easy for the reader to understand, with the goal of enabling the reader to feel they have been an active participant in the research and can apply the findings to a similar situation (Yin, 2003).

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative studies the researcher is considered a human instrument and a mediator of the data (Simon, 2011). The research is an “instrument of data collection” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 22). Therefore, readers of the research need to understand the biases, assumptions, expectations, and experiences that qualify the researcher to conduct the research (Greenbank, 2003). One way to bracket bias in a qualitative study is to record field notes and analytical memos throughout the data collection and analysis process (Tufford & Newman, 2010). A second way bias was controlled for in the study is through member checking, or providing each participant with a transcription of the interview for review of accuracy in the data (Harper & Cole, 2012).

The role of the researcher in this study present both benefits and liabilities. The researcher is a corporate learning and development expert for the company where the study was conducted. Benefits from this role of the researcher are 1) familiarity with the company’s culture, customs, values, and traditions, 2) easier access to gatekeepers, and participants, 3) understanding of terminology routinely used in the company, and 4) increased trust and rapport with the participants. Potential liabilities stemming from the role of the researcher are 1) need to bracket personal experiences with the company so the experiences do not in any way influence the questions or analysis of participant perceptions, 2) familiarity between research and participant could lead to the participant saying what he or she believes the researcher want to

hear, and 3) potential participants may not agree to an interview conducted by a fellow company employee due to perceptions of confidentiality.

Ethics

Qualitative research can be more intrusive than quantitative research; therefore, ethical guidelines regarding consent, confidentiality, anonymity, deception, and privacy need to be established (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Seidman, 1991). Consent, confidentiality and privacy was considered in the use of the data sources for this study. Written consent was obtained prior to using the scores and the participants were well-informed about opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. Confidentiality was maintained at all times and each participant in the study was assigned a pseudonym. All transcripts, artifacts (concept maps and index cards), scores on the pre-existing grit and resilience company assessments, researcher field notes, and other pertinent documents containing any identifying information were stored in password-protected electronic files or locked file cabinets (for paper data).

Setting

The setting for the data collection included face-to-face recorded interviews on site at the corporate organization's headquarters in New Jersey or through recorded skype conversations for participants who were unable to attend a face-to-face interview. The interviews were conducted for 60 minutes and took place in a private meeting room. At the beginning of the interviews the researcher described the research purpose and process to the interviewees, obtained consent, and provided instruction related to the completion of the two social artifact exercises. Participants who attended the interviews through skype were emailed the social artifact activities in advance.

Three participants completed the interviews in person and nine participants completed the interviews online through skype.

In contacting the corporate gatekeeper (Director of Human Resources) to request permission to contact participants for the study, the researcher also requested permission to use the participant's grit and resilience scores from prior company assessments as a tool for sample selection and to conduct data analysis within and across cases. Participants were informed that their grit and resilience scores were used to place individuals with similar scores into groups to select the maximum variation sample for the study. Further, the groups were used to compare whether any themes related to thriving at work emerge across and within different grit and resilience group levels. Caution was taken to prevent any identifying information from the participant's interviews, social artifacts, or grit and resilience scores to be reported in the study that could in any way be traced back to an employee in the company. In sum, all data for the study were kept confidential and no identifying information was reported.

Sample

The sample for the study included employees who had completed both the 14-item Adversity Quotient (AQ) Profile and the 10 item Grit Gauge (GG) over the last 5 years. A listing of these employees was provided to the researcher, who then contacted the potential participants to gauge interest in becoming a part of the research study. Nineteen of the 26 potential participants agreed to participate in the study. Twelve of these 19 employees were chosen using maximum variation sampling.

Sampling Method

The sampling method of maximum variation was used to group individuals who possessed diverse levels of grit and resilience and to identify common patterns that cut across and between these variations. Selection included 12 people from the organization as follows: three people with high grit and resilience scores, three people with medium-high grit and resilience scores, three people with medium-low grit and resilience scores, and three people with low grit and resilience scores. The use of maximum variation sampling for this study provide a rich portrait of thriving at work from individuals who possessed different variations of grit and resilience traits.

Data Collection Procedures

The initial data sources that were used in this research included scores from a 14 item Adversity Quotient (AQ) Profile (Appendix A) and scores from a 10 item Grit Gauge (Appendix B), developed by Paul Stoltz from Peak Learning and administered to the specific corporate organization included in this research (Stoltz, 2015). These instruments were built by Peak Learning using the existing research regarding resilience and grit. The assessments are used by organizations to measure grit and resilience of employees for their own self-awareness and self-improvement purposes and to provide opportunities for individual growth in grit and resilience. These scores were used as prescreening instruments to ensure the research included a diverse group of associates from the organization who had exposure to both grit and resilience assessment and training opportunities.

A semi structured interview guide (Appendix C) guided the conversation between researcher and participant related to the concept of thriving at work. A pilot study was

conducted to validate the effectiveness of the questions included in the guide and ensured the questions induced information that answered the research questions.

The first social artifact exercise was the completion of a concept map. “A concept map is a schematic device for representing a set of concept meanings embedded in a framework of propositions” (Novak & Gowin, 1984, p. 16). Concept mapping helps increase participant involvement and helps the balance the power between the researcher and the participants (Freeman, 2004). The participants were provided a piece of paper with the word “thriving” written in the middle (Appendix D). The participants were asked to develop a concept map that answered the question: What relational factors would you describe as important to your ability to thrive at work? According to research some of the most important relational factors include (1) support from manager and coworkers, (2) working together towards a common goal, and (3) positive relationships (Abid, Zahra, & Ahmed, 2016).

The second social artifact exercise elicited data about the organizational factors that contribute most to the participant’s ability to thrive at work (Appendix E). The participants were provided note cards that contained five important organizational factors found in the academic literature that contribute to a person’s ability to thrive at work. These factors are (1) feeling valued, (2) well-being support, (3) personal learning, (4) purpose, and (5) receiving feedback (Spreitzer & Sutcliffe, 2007). Additionally, the participants were provided blank note cards and asked to write five unique factors of their own ability to thrive. After the self-generated cards were ready, the participants were asked to rank the 10 cards in order of most important to least important in terms of enabling them to thrive at work. These two social artifact exercises provided additional data as well as allowed engagement and further reflection for the participants on the topic of thriving prior to the interviews.

The interviews were recorded with permission from the interviewees and then transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The transcript data, concept maps, note card ranking activity data were entered into Excel spreadsheets.

In sum, the data collection methods used in this study included both interviews and the completion of two social artifact exercises. Interviews were conducted using a semi structured approach with topic guides developed to ensure key questions were covered and prompts were included to ensure specific issues were addressed if the issues did not emerge as a natural part of the conversations. Concept mapping was used in this study to provide “graphical organization and demonstration of knowledge or experience” (Novak & Canas, 2008, p. 2) and the use of propositions that link concepts to represent meaningful relationships (Novak & Gowin, 1984). Note cards were used to engage participants in an activity that identified the factors related to thriving at work as well as providing an individualized ranking of those factors from least important to most important.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative design includes finding patterns and common themes that may emerge in response to specific questions or items. In analyzing the interview data, the first step was to provide the interviewees with a copy of the interview transcription so that it could be checked for accuracy and validation. Next, coding was completed to create categories and subcategories related to the research. The qualitative analytic process begins with assigning logically deduced codes to data followed by categorization of the codes (Charmez, 2006). Therefore, several rounds of coding was completed to ensure the appropriate categories and subcategories were identified and that the findings were grounded in the data. The data analysis

for the concept mapping used a similar approach, with categories and subcategories identified and aligned with the data from the interviews, and then coding was completed to establish key points and emerging themes. Data analysis for the note card activity listed the 10 factors related to thriving at work for each participant in a column with the number (1-10) next to it that identified as least rewarding (1) to most rewarding (10). These factors were then grouped, clustered, and coded and findings from the activity provided additional data for triangulation with the interview and concept map data, while also generating a list of the most common factors participants relate to thriving at work. The least important and most important rankings are reported (Appendix G).

Data Presentation

Following the analyses of all interview, concept map and note card data, a master code list for the interview transcripts was developed to align codes with categories. Two rounds of coding was completed. The first round of open coding was conducted by reviewing the interview transcripts and employing a line-by-line coding methodology. Through this first round of coding patterns and themes emerged that developed initial subcategories. In the second round of the interview transcript coding, reclassification, and filtering of the first round coded data was conducted that enabled salient themes to emerge (Saldana, 2009). Constant comparative analysis was used to identify themes, patterns, and findings across all transcript data (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Next, the concepts maps and ranking files were coded using axial coding to align the themes that emerged from the interviews to the themes that emerge from the exercises. Axial coding helps brings the data together to form connections between categories and then explain the phenomenon (Charmez, 2006). Code mapping including three iterations of analysis is outlined below in Table 1. Lastly, the themes related to thriving that emerged from the

interviews and social artifact exercises were compared to the constructs of thriving identified in existing research. Findings from the research are provided in Chapter 4.

Table 1

Code Mapping: Three Iterations of Analysis (to be read from the bottom up)

CODE MAPPING FOR THRIVING IN A FORTUNE 500 COMPANY
(Research Questions 1, 2, and 3)

RQ#1: Individual factors?	RQ#2: Relational factors?	RQ#3: Organizational factors?
---------------------------	---------------------------	-------------------------------

(THIRD ITERATION: APPLICATION TO DATA SET)

Positive connections, support of family and coworkers, passion and expertise, a sense of resolve and determination and time for self and others, lead to thriving in a Fortune 500 Company

(SECOND ITERATION: PATTERN VARIABLES)

1A. Positive connections/support from others	2A. Family and caring coworkers	3A. Sense of resolve and determination
1B. Leveraging passion and expertise	2B. External support network	3B. Time for self/others

(FIRST ITERATION: INITIAL CODES/SURFACE CONTENT ANALYSIS)

1A. High Performing Team	2A. Supportive Family	3A. Purpose
1A. People connections	2A. Caring Boss	3A. Ability to take risks
1A. Boss I can trust	2A. Best Friends/Coworkers	3A. Feeling Valued
1A. Support from home/family	2A. Mentors	3A. Realistic Goals
1B. Growing/Challenged	2B. Cross-functional Support	3B. Personal Learning
1B. Passion/Right Attitude	2B. Senior Leader Support	3B. Well-being Support
1B. Having Expertise	2B. External Network	3B. Flexibility/Work/Life Balance
1B. Flexibility/Freedom	2B. Vendors/Customer Support	3B. Responsibility

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe the ability to thrive at work for current employees in a Fortune 500 company in New Jersey. Three research questions informed the qualitative study. The research participants were first placed into groups using their grit and resilience scores from previous assessments to create the maximum variation sample. The 12 study participants completed a semi structured interview and completed two social artifact exercises. The analysis and findings from these interviews and exercises are presented in this chapter.

The credibility of this study comes from the methodological triangulation used to gather the data, member checks of the interview transcripts and social artifact exercises, and from participant documents and researcher notes. Data analysis began with conducting member checks of the interview transcripts and the collation of social artifact exercises. Following the member checks, qualitative data were coded using two operations: first, the qualitative data were separated into units, next, category sets were established to help form conclusions (Guetzkow, 1950). The data coding for this research involved an iterative process. The process included: the development of preset codes the identification of emergent codes, and the refining of all codes to achieve finalized categories (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

The 12 semi structured interviews and completion of social artifact exercises occurred during the month of January 2018. The research participants completed the concept maps and ranking exercises prior to the semi structured interviews, and the exercises were discussed with

the participants during the interview process. The research participants received a copy of their interview transcriptions in a written format and were asked to review these transcripts to check for accuracy and validation. The process of member checking was used to increase the study's credibility and proved to be an effective process; all participant's wrote back saying they had no substantive changes or contributions to add to the transcript. The 12 research participants were asked to provide their own pseudonym and, therefore, are identified throughout the study as: Warren, Kiki, Chris, Tina, Susie, Willy, Nora, Sarah, Bob, Lefty, Mary, and Zulu.

Participant Profiles

The participants in this research study are all employees of the same Fortune 500 Company in New Jersey. Each study participant met the criteria of having completed both the 14 item Adversity Quotient (AQ) Profile and the 10 item Grit Gauge (GG) over the last five years and was willing to participate in the study. Their participation in the study included: providing access to their resilience and grit scores, completing the semi-structured interview, and completing the two social artifact exercises. These 12 study participants were chosen from an initial group of 19 employees using maximum variation sampling. Three individuals had low resilience and grit scores, three had medium low scores, three had medium high scores, and three had high resilience and grit scores. These employees are all managers within the organization at various levels: five are first level managers, five are mid-level managers, and two are senior level managers. The employees who participated in the study provided plenteous data on their perceptions of thriving in the workplace. A profile is provided of each study participant in the proceeding paragraphs, grouped by maximum variation category.

Low Grit and Resilience Scores

Zulu has worked with the Fortune 500 Company in the study for over 21 years and has held eight different roles. She described enjoying both the new challenges and the different opportunities that her current role provides. She defined thriving as, “being in a job that allows you to do your best every day.” Zulu was very positive about her work, her team, and the support she receives from her manager. She loves the freedom and flexibility that she is given to prioritize her work and to be able to work flexible hours when needed. She rated her ability to thrive at work as an 8 out of 10.

Chris has been with the organization in the study for 5 years and has had four different roles. Chris says that he enjoys working on the internal side of the business, developing new processes and building relationships with new people in his current role. He defined thriving as, “not just doing your job, but doing your job so well that the team depends on you and passion abounds.” Chris stated, “Working for this Fortune 500 Company has been great for my development and provided me the opportunity to be a better-rounded businessman.” He described having just started a new role, because of this rated his ability to thrive at work as a 4 out of 10, as he is learning how to perform the new role.

Tina has worked with the Fortune 500 Company for 25 years and has had six different roles. She works in an analytical role currently and has the opportunity to gather and analyze data and then provide recommendations. Tina feels this role really plays to her strengths and allows her to do what she does best. She defined thriving as, “going to work, doing your best, learning and growing every day and succeeding in your goals.” Tina rated her ability as to thrive at work as an 8 out of 10 and discussed that there are still several unknowns in her current role that tend to hold her back at times.

Medium Low Grit and Resilience Scores

Bob has a tenure of 10 years with the organization and has had three different roles during this time. His current role involves supporting a unique subgroup external to the Fortune 500 Company. Bob has a lot of pride in supporting this external subgroup and described how motivating it is for him to be able to represent this group of people in his daily work. He defined thriving as, “enjoying, growing and gaining each day.” Bob discussed the challenges he has faced working with the unique subgroup, but rated his ability to thrive as an 8 out of 10.

Nora has been with the Fortune 50 Company for 10 years and has had five different roles. Nora enjoys her current role and described it as much different from roles she had in the past. She moved into a customer facing role, whereas in the past, she had internal support roles. She discussed finding satisfaction in working with external customers and seeing her work come to life in retail stores. Nora described thriving as, “not just surviving, but learning through tough circumstances.” She rated her ability to thrive as an 8 out of 10. Nora explained that her score would be a 10 but she is stretched beyond her capacity currently.

Lefty has worked with the Fortune 500 Company for 14 years and had nine different roles. He described enjoying many different aspects of his current role, including: interfacing with multiple stakeholders, the focus his role has on building a customer centric organization, the expertise and “street cred” that he brings to the role, and the opportunity to use the organizational agility he has built over the years, which enables him to feel comfortable taking calculated risks. Lefty talked about being known within the business for his “spidey senses” and how he enjoys the credibility he has from having experienced customer facing roles and internal support roles throughout his career with this organization. He defined thriving as, “feeling pride and passion in my organization, in my work and in my peers and co-workers.” Lefty rated his ability to

thrive at work as a 7.5 out of 10 citing the lack of tools and resources needed in his current role, cause him to be less efficient and effective.

Medium High Grit and Resilience Scores

Susie has worked in the organization in the research study for 30 years and has worked in 14 different roles. She described her current role as being challenging, but yet playing to her strengths. She talked about her current role involving problem solving, relationship building and cross-functional leadership. Susie said her team is very supportive of each other and described how much fun they had working together. She gave an example of everyone on the team having a nickname that they call one another. Susie described thriving as, “being in an environment where your opinions matter and where you are set up for success.” She rated her ability to thrive at work as a 10 out of 10, stating she is allowed to make decisions and provided flexibility.

Sarah has been an employee of the organization in the study for 15 years and had five roles during this time. She enjoys her current role and in particular and likes working across several functions, enjoys working on the largest direct ship customer in the business, and feels she is continuously learning. Sarah mentioned she is treated with respect and feels her role serves an important purpose for the business. She defines thriving as, “the ability to get up every day and be excited about going into the office, and feeling happy throughout my day.” Sarah believes she is doing what she does best in her current role and enjoyed creating new processes and working on multiple projects at the same time. She rated her ability to thrive as an 8 out of 10 and mentioned the support received from her manager and her coworkers.

The next study participant is Willy. He has been with the organization for 10 years and worked in six different roles. Willy began his career in the Fortune 500 Company as a

contractor. He worked in this capacity for 2 years before he was hired as a full-time employee. Willy mentioned how fortunate he felt to have been hired by the company and how he has been provided the opportunity to manage his own career and make the most of his time with the business. He also mentioned that his current role allows him opportunities to meet new people and use the expertise he built in prior roles. Willy defined thriving as, “being able to succeed and excel at work.” He rated his ability to thrive in his current role as an 8 out of 10 and said it would be a 10, if it weren’t for some confusion on roles and responsibilities.

High Grit and Resilience Scores

Warren has been with the Fortune 500 Company for 28 years and had four different roles over those years. He described his current role being a role he had in the past, over 10 years ago. Warren said he was brought back into the role because of his expertise. He noted even though he had been in the same role previously, many changes had occurred. Warren felt things had become more complex and challenging over the years, although he mentioned that some of the people he worked with in the past, he is again working with currently. Warren spoke of his work with passion and excitement. He explained that attitude is very important to him and he understands having a positive attitude can be contagious. Warren defined thriving as, “having a great attitude every day and being filled with pride and passion for your work.” He rated his ability to thrive as a 10 out of 10 and described himself as, “unstoppable.”

Another study participant is Mary. She has been with the organization for 12 years and had six different roles. Mary had to reschedule the interview twice, citing that she was busy with the start of the year. She talked of loving the fast pace of her work, the intense pressure, and the need for collaboration with others. Mary defined thriving as, “making progress each day, feeling good, being happy in all aspects of life and getting respect from your coworkers.” She rated her

ability to thrive as a 7 out of 10, noting she lacks the innovation she needs to grow the business and lacks some of the tools and resources needed for ultimate success. Mary mentioned she has to be careful about pushing too hard for things because she has received feedback throughout the years that she is seen as a “bulldog.”

The final research participant is Kiki. She has worked for the organization in the study for 15 years and had eight different roles. Kiki said she loves her current role and is excited every day to be able to help develop others. She described a new responsibility she has been given to build the overall strategy for her team. She also noted that her years of experience have helped her be viewed as an expert. The opportunity to develop the strategy and the expertise that she brings help her thrive. She defined thriving as, “doing what I do best every day, being challenged and stretched and having people look to me as an expert.” Kiki rated her ability to thrive as a 9 out of 10 and said it would be a 10 if others on her team were more collaborative.

Researcher’s Notes and Memos

The researcher journaled notes and personal memos and reviewed recordings of the interviews to capture verbatim comments and accurate responses from the study participants. Throughout the interviews emerging ideas were captured and follow-up questions were asked to ensure clarity and understanding. The semi-structured interview guide was followed and was refined throughout the interview period that took place in January 2018.

The interview guide was developed to ensure the same general topics of information were asked of each study participant, allowing more focus and direction than a conversational approach, but provided the researcher the ability to flex and adapt as necessary to gain relevant information from the participant during the interview (MacNamara, 2009). The semi structured

interviews began with general warm-up questions to the study participants before getting into questions related to the specific research (Bernard, 2000). The social artifact exercises were developed to gather data from the participants in a structured way and also help actively engage the interviewees throughout the interview process. Observations made by the researcher during the interview and the data collection processes are noted in the following paragraphs.

The researcher noted the 12 study participants seemed actively engaged during the interviews. The participants were eager to share their perceptions of thriving in the workplace and, with one exception, kept to their original scheduled interview time without having to reschedule. One participant, Mary did ask to reschedule her interview a couple of times, but once the interview began, she was focused and engaged, had completed the two social artifact exercises and seemed ready to discuss her responses. Following the first four interviews, the researcher noted the participants had similar questions related to the completion of the two social artifact exercises therefore, the researcher reached out to the remaining eight interviewees with more detailed instruction on how to complete the exercises; prior to the interviews. This additional instruction worked, as the remaining interviewees had no issues completing the exercises and did not ask follow-up questions about correctly completing the exercises during the interview process. Several study participants continued to refine their exercise responses during the interview, which enabled further clarity and understanding of the responses for both the researcher and the study participants.

As noted previously, the semi structured interview was developed to begin with some general warm-up questions, which seemed to put the interviewees at ease before getting into the questions structured around the research. Following the general warm-up questions 1-4, question 5 asked the participants to define thriving in their own terms, followed by question 6 that asked

them to discuss their current ability to thrive at work. These questions 5-6 along with interview questions 7-10, were used to collect data on the individual factors that enabled the study participants to thrive at work (Research Question 1). Questions 11-16, along with the concept mapping exercise, were related to relational factors to enable thriving (Research Question 2). Questions 17-19, along with the ranking exercise, were related to organizational factors contributing to thriving (Research Question 3). A research blueprint was developed to demonstrate the connection of the interview questions and the social artifact exercises to the corresponding research question (Appendix F).

During the interview process the researcher noted that although the study participants had varied definitions of thriving, they all used similar words and phrases to describe the various factors contributing to their ability to thrive. The researcher also noted that the embedded culture at the Fortune 500 Company showed in some responses, as the participants relied on the organization's '5 Principles' (Quality, Responsibility, Mutuality, Efficiency, and Freedom) to describe some of the factors relating to their ability to thrive at work.

Additional notes made by the researcher throughout the interview process with the study participants included:

- Study participants were open to sharing specific examples of when they were able to thrive best at work as well as sharing times when they were not able to thrive. The participants were open to sharing personal details, including health related issues or personal issues such as divorce that impacted their ability to thrive at certain points in their career.
- Constructive insight was gathered from responses to question 9, "When something goes wrong for you with regards to your work, what do you do to help make things

better?” The question responses to this question provided further insight into how the study participants naturally responded to tough situations, which then enabled them to focus on how this natural response was related to individual factors that enabled them to thrive.

- Guiding the participants through the transitions from one set of interview questions (i.e. questions 7-10, related to individual factors) to the next (i.e. questions 11-16, related to relational factors) helped the study participants focus on answering the question with the right context in mind.
- Including the final open-ended question, “As you think about our discussion today, are there any other factors we have not already discussed, that would enhance your ability to thrive?”, provided the study participants with the space to continue to contribute additional thoughts or in some cases to feel comfortable concluding the discussion.
- Differences were seen in the responses across and between the maximum variation sample strategies.

Interview Analysis

“Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. No formula exists for that transformation” (Patton, 2002 p. 432). Denzin (2000) referred to the task of making meaning of impressions, transcriptions of interviews, researcher notes, and memos as, “practice and policies of interpretation” (Denzin, 2000, p.897). The researcher in this study used constant comparative analysis to identify patterns and then construct a master code and category list.

Interview transcripts were developed by the researcher using notes, memos, and interview recordings. The recordings were provided to the study participants for member

checking. Upon completion of the member checks, first iteration codes were developed from the line-by-line interview transcripts leading to development of a master code list. Second round coding followed through interpretation of emerging themes and patterns to develop categories, followed by a third iteration that applied the categories to the data set. The coding rounds were completed from two research lens; 1) the 12 interviews collectively, and 2) through the 12 interviews with maximum variation sampling strategy in place, looking across and between cases.

Interview Results

The 12 study participants were provided an overview of the study as well as an informed consent letter. Prior to setting up the interviews with the study participants, the signed consent letters were collected. The interview dates were set up with each study participant and the social artifact exercises were provided, along with instructions for completing the exercises prior to the interview, with the option for the participant to complete the exercises during the interview process as well. At the start of each interview, the researcher reviewed the purpose of the study and reviewed the informed consent. The researcher reminded the research participants of the voluntary nature of their participation in the interview and reminded them that they could withdraw from the interview at any time. The researcher then asked the study participants for permission to record the interviews. The recordings and notes were used to transcribe the interview data and generate transcripts that were used for member checking. Relevant quotes from the transcripts were used to develop the themes and support the patterns and applications noted in the research study.

Research Question 1

How do participants describe the individual factors that relate to their ability to thrive at work?

Theme 1: The Individual Factors of Positive Connections and Support from Others Creates Thriving Employees. Working on a high performing team with coworkers who are trustworthy and care about each other helps workers thrive. Additionally, having a supportive manager and someone to confide in when things get tough helps employees feel valued and inspired to do their best at work.

Low Grit and Resilience Scores

When asked about the factors that enable someone to do their best and feel positive about their work, Zulu replied:

I have been given the opportunity to manage a team, which really helps you thrive on a personal level and a professional level because it helps you grow in so many ways. I meet with my team on a weekly basis, even if it is just to touch base and make sure that things are working for them the way they should be, if not we work together to fix it. It requires a level of trust and vulnerability. In my career I had a manager who was not a good manager and had a terrible management style. This was such a rough time for me and I want to make sure this is not the case for my team.

Chris also mentioned that working with a supportive team enables him to thrive. He talked about both the team that he is a part of as well as the team that he manages:

Thriving to me is not just doing your job, but doing your job as an employee and as a manager so well that the team comes to depend on you. I used to manage a team (I inherited this team) where several members just punched the clock every day. They

didn't show up well and my coaching wasn't getting through to them. I ended up taking on their work just to make sure it got done.

Chris realized that he needed support from others to help turn this circumstance around:

I ended up reaching out to my boss and human resources support for help. They helped me put together a plan to work these employees out of the business. I then had the opportunity to hire some new people into my team who were excited and passionate about their jobs. We have developed into a very high performing team and this helps me get excited about coming to work and getting things done with my team each day.

Support from others needs to come from both a work perspective and from a personal perspective as well. Tina shared why this is so important to her ability to thrive:

I love my team, everyone is very positive and we share the same goals. We all have each other's backs. If I know I need to leave early because my kids have an afterschool activity I need to attend, I know I can go and feel confident that any requests for reports or analysis that come in while I am gone will be covered by someone from the team. We all support each other and are there for each other no matter what happens. Other teams see how supportive we are of one another and can learn from our team.

Medium Low Grit and Resilience Scores

Understanding who to work with, how to work with them and gain their support is critical in getting things done within this Fortune 500 Company. Nora explains how her support network (internally and externally) enables her to do her job well:

Relationships that I have built in the company have helped me. I know who to work and how to get things done inside the office, because I have worked in the office. This helps me out in the field get things done for my customers. I have a few customers that are really great to work with and I use this to help me with my more difficult customers. Having these great relationships with my customers is really motivating to me. My other counterparts are great. Our associate base is great here and that really helps me enjoy my work.

Lefty worked within another segment of this Fortune 500 Company prior to beginning work within this specific segment. He explained that a key difference between the two segments was the reliance on process versus the reliance on people in getting things accomplished:

I have been with this organization for 14 years. The first 9 years of my career was spent working within the segment that was recently acquired by this Fortune 500 Company. In my previous role there was a heavy reliance on processes and tools to get things done and there was a lot of discipline. In my current role I need to talk to multiple people to get things done. I like to work this way because it has given me the opportunity to grow my network and interface with multiple stakeholders daily. I have figured out now who within my network can help me gain easy access to the information I need. These connections help me enjoy my role and keep me motivated.

Medium High Grit and Resilience Scores

Susie relies on the support she receives from her manager and her team to help her work through tough situations. When asked when something goes wrong at work what she does to help turn things around and feel positive about her work, she replied:

Things happen and things go wrong just about every day in my role. I learned very early in my career that when problems arise it is best just to ‘face into it.’ This may mean confronting someone, having the tough conversation, or even confrontation. But I know through my experience, once this is done, you can build trust with that person and take your relationship to a new level. When this does not work, I start having conversations with my boss and my team to help me work through solutions to make things right. On our team everyone works hard to help one another. We have given each other nicknames and we have a lot of fun together. We also face into tough situations together. Having a boss and a team to go to drives me to be at my best.

Willy described one thing he enjoys most about his current role is the new connections he has been able to make working across a segment of the business where he knew few people a couple of months earlier.

High Grit and Resilience Scores

A positive attitude, opportunities to grow and learn, and being part of a passionate, committed team are the key individual factors Warren described as enabling him to thrive:

My team is passionate about their work. This passion and positivity is contagious and helps me stay motivated and accomplish great things with my customers. When you are passionate, you get into the details and this is evident to the customer. My team helps me remove roadblocks and get things done. Without this team, I would not be successful.

Building strong relationships with coworkers was the individual factor that Mary described as most important for her to thrive in her role in internal support. Mary talked about how critical it was in her role for others to respond when she asked them for information:

Personal relationships are very important to me. I need people to respect me, respond to me, show up for calls that I schedule with them and value the work that I do. So I work hard to build relationships with our customer facing teams. I can't do my job well if the customer teams don't provide me with the information I need to be able to help them and their customers.

Kiki shared the support of her manager as one of the top individual factors that helps her thrive each day. She detailed the support she receives and the role this manager plays in helping her thrive:

My manager is the best. She has developed a vision and strategy for our team that truly inspires me. She has provided our team with a new level of credibility with the senior leadership team.

Theme 2: The Individual Factors of Leveraging Passion and Expertise Enables Employees to Thrive. Passion is a stronghold that can help people thrive even in stagnant or difficult times (Cameron, 2012). This thinking resonates with the study participants included in this research, as seven of the 12 mentioned passion as an enabler to thriving at work. Additionally, learning and growing to develop and leverage expertise is a factor the study participants described as critical to their ability to thrive.

Low Grit and Resilience Scores

Zulu, Chris, and Tina did not mention passion nor leveraging expertise as factors that helped them thrive at work. Although Zulu and Tina did mention facing new challenges and learning as things they enjoyed about their current roles.

Medium Low Grit and Resilience Scores

Bob and Nora did not mention passion nor leveraging expertise as factors being important to their ability to thrive. Although Bob did define thriving as, “enjoying, growing and gaining each day.” Passion and leveraging expertise were high on Lefty’s list of individual factors that impacted his ability to thrive. Lefty described that if pride and passion come from a team that he is working on or managing, this motivates him to do his best.

I go as they go. If the team is passionate about their work, this drives me to be passionate as well. Another factor important to me is leveraging my expertise and credibility. I am known for my ‘street cred’ internally because my team knows I have worked on the toughest customer in the business. They count on me to use my ‘spidey senses’ to take calculated risks and make good decisions. I enjoy learning and building on this expertise. I try and read a book a month so that I can continue to stretch myself and learn.

Medium High Grit and Resilience Scores

Each of the study participants with medium high and high grit and resilience scores mentioned leveraging passion and expertise as factors that enabled them to thrive at work. Susie described her ability to solve problems and how she used the experience she has gained in her 30 years with the organization to get to root cause quickly when a problem arises.

There are very few problems that I can’t solve. I have seen so much in my time with this business, I usually know at least where to start to solve a problem. My team counts on me to help resolve issues and they come to me for my expertise regularly. This helps me understand that I am valued in this business and drives me to want to be at my best.

Sarah spoke of the expertise she has developed by working with many different functions within the business:

I have worked with Sales, Service & Finance (S&F), Research & Development (R&D), and Supply for over 5 years. This has helped me deepen my perspective and caused me to become an expert in several areas. I am excited to work for a company that values this experience and isn't trying to get rid of me, because I am over 50. Learning is so important to me. I want to 'show up' well when working with others. I am constantly trying to learn new skills.

Willy talked about how the energy and passion that people in this organization have for what they are doing is unlike any other company he has worked with in the past:

When I began my work here as a contractor 10 years ago, I was floored by the energy and passion that people had for their work. I had worked as a contractor at many other companies in this industry and this was the first company where I thought I would really like to work here full time.

Willy also mentioned his desire to be skilled, "I get stale and anxious if I am on the same role for too long. I have this burning desire to be skilled in many different areas."

High Grit and Resilience Scores

Warren defined thriving as, "having a great attitude every day and being filled with pride for your work and passion." Additionally, Warren spoke of having become an expert in his role:

I have been with the business for 28 years. My current role is a role that I had for 15 years. Then I was moved into another role for 10 years before being put back into the old role. I have now become the 'resident expert' in this channel for the business. My teammates and sometime even my boss reach out to me for advice on how to handle issues with customers. I really enjoy this role and appreciate being seen as an expert.

This is probably what I enjoy most about my job and why I look forward to going to work each day.

When Mary was asked the question, “When something goes wrong for you with regards to your work, what do you do to make things better/right?” She responded with the following:

I always try to have a great attitude no matter what has happened. I have learned that having the right attitude and having passion for your work are so important in dealing with the day-to-day issues that come up.

Kiki defined thriving as, “doing what I do best every day, being challenged and stretched and having people look to me as an expert.” When asked about what she does when something goes wrong, she responded:

For me it is all about learning. So I ask myself what can I learn from this? How can I use my past experience to make things right?

Research Question 2

What relational factors do participants describe as important for the ability to thrive at work?

Theme 3. The Relational Factors of Support from Family and Caring Co-workers Helps Employees Thrive. It was clear from the interviews and concept map exercise that family support and caring coworkers (including a caring boss) help employees at this Fortune 500 Company thrive. When the study participants developed their concepts maps, family support, caring coworkers, and a caring boss were the largest circles on each of the 12 study participant’s maps.

Low Grit and Resilience Scores

A team that is respectful and a caring boss were the two largest circles from Zulu's concept map:

The largest circles on my map are having the respect of my team and having a caring boss who is a mentor to me. When I say having the respect of my team, I mean working with a group of people who are open, trusting, and willing to be vulnerable. I have a great team and enjoy this opportunity to manage a team again. I find a lot of satisfaction working with this group of people and I love how we are able to support one another. In terms of having a caring boss who is also a mentor over the years, I have had the opposite of this. I had one manager who was not a good manager and had a terrible management style. I had to work with our company ombudsman to work through this situation and it was an awful time in my career. This helped me realize how important to me it is to have a caring boss and to be a caring boss for my own team.

Family support was the largest circle for Tina, followed by caring coworkers and a caring boss. Tina described why these relationships are important to her ability to thrive:

Having a happy family to come home to is so important to me. My husband and I both have full-time, stressful jobs. So, when we aren't on the same page, this causes a lot of struggle. And when things are going well at home, it makes it so much easier for things to go well at work. My next largest circle is caring coworkers. I love my current team: we are very candid with each other, have very open communication, everyone is positive, we have each other's backs and there are no personal agendas because we all share the same goals. This type of support helps me to do my best. Equal to my circle of caring coworkers is a caring boss. My boss is so supportive. I feel comfortable to pick up the

phone and call her to seek feedback and work on issues together. One smaller circle for me is my special packs team. We meet daily to stay on the same page and I could not do my job without the collaboration of this team.

Similarly, Chris had family support as his largest circle, followed by a high performing team. These circles were followed by a collaborative customer, internal relationships, an enabling boss, support from our most senior leaders, and peer group support. Chris talked about how important relational factors are for him to be able to thrive:

Family support is the most important factor for me. My job is very stressful at times and knowing that my wife and my children support me and are there for me is essential. I am currently headquartered in two spots, and I travel back and forth from city to city. So if my family did not support me in this role and with this travel, this would not work. The second most important thing for me to thrive is having a high performing team. I have worked with three companies, I have seen a lot and have been at this for 12 years. I have seen great examples of this and some really bad examples, so I know how critical a high performing team is to me. The third and fourth circles (customer relationships and internal relationships) are equal for me but are all about relationships. Can you collaborate with people? Can you build that trusting relationship with others? In my experience with other companies and with this company, I can tell you that these two factors are much more important at this company than any other.

Med Low Grit and Resilience Scores

The themes of family support, engaged teams and caring boss carry through with the next group of study participants as well. Bob identified family support and the ability to manage a

productive team as the two largest circles on the concept map he created, followed by an encouraging supervisor.

Although Nora had family and boss as large circles on her map, equally she had created circles for good customer relationships and great peers and counterparts. She explained why these circles were all equal:

So right now for me the relationships I think about the most are working with a great customer and having support from my peers and coworkers. Working with a great customer is important because I also have customers that aren't so great. So I need to know that I am doing things right with at least my biggest customer and can use this to help me with the others. Also, when things are stressful, it is good to know that my peers and coworkers have my back. Also, they know I am here for them to and that I can help them. This feels good and helps me thrive. If this were last year, my family and my boss would probably be top of mind, but as I have transitioned into a new role, the customer and my peers become equally important relationships.

Lefty's largest circles were family support, which was equal to a circle named, faith and religion. The next two largest circles were supportive boss and caring team.

Medium High Grit and Resilience Scores

Consistent with the other research study participants Susie had caring boss as one of the relational factors that most impacts her ability to thrive:

I view this company as my family. Having worked here for 30 years, and having a son who now works here as well, I consider this company a part of my family. Therefore, having a true leader who understands me and cares about me as a person, is critical to my success. My manager is fair, he doesn't micromanage and he is always in my corner.

Susie followed this circle with a circle for teammates/mentors and a circle for boyfriend. She describes the impact of teammates/mentors as follows:

My teammates are a part of my brotherhood and sisterhood. I know they have my back and I relish the support that we give one another.

Sarah had family as her largest circle, followed by caring boss and then a best friend at work. Her comments on why these were her largest circles are very similar to the other study participants. Willy, similarly had family as his largest circle followed by a circle called line manger support.

High Grit and Resilience Scores

The concept map for Warren had four equal sized circles that were, family, team, manager, and best friends at work. Warren explains why his circles are equal:

The bigger circles for me would be, team, then manager relationship because people leave companies because of the manager, not because of the company, and these help me get up every day. A best friend at work is important and having people you can talk to, these friendships are critical to have at work. It is important to have great associates and for the company to hire good people to help everyone thrive. The family is important too, I have had the support of my wife for over 30 years now and this means a lot to me.

When you ask me which ones are most important in the context of thriving, these are hard to differentiate. I think for me these are all equal. It takes a balance.

Relational factors for Mary were the most important factors in her ability to thrive.

Throughout the interview Mary spoke of relationships with others as critical. She brought up relational factors in her answers to most questions and her concept map was very detailed with

many different circles color coded with connections and overlaps. Mary detailed her largest circles as:

Building strong relationships with my co-workers and working cross-functionally to get things done are my two biggest circles. I need people to respond to me when I ask for information, so building these relationships so that people want to respond and show up for the meetings I schedule with them is critical. I need actions from my co-workers and our customers to thrive. A caring boss is always important and having friends at work is important too.

Kiki had similar responses with regards to the questions around relational factors that enable her to thrive. Additionally, her concept map was detailed with several different circles. She described her concept map with the following:

My map is pretty busy. I know that for me relationships are key. Around the concept of thrive, I would have: a high performing team, my family, and friends as my biggest circle, then, someone to rely on that I can vent to when things are tough, and a mentor. Then, I would have some smaller circles such as, cross-functional coworkers, my manager, senior leader support from the top, and then finally a smaller circle with my external network.

Theme 4: The Relational Factor of an External Support Network Expands Employees' Social Connections which Leads to Thriving. Another theme that emerged from several of the research study participants was building a network outside of the organization to expand their connections. External networks include, vendors, industry groups, nannies, house cleaners, and any others outside of this Fortune 500 Company. The study participants mentioning these external support networks felt they were critical to thriving.

Low Grit and Resilience Scores and Medium Low Grit and Resilience Scores

None of the study participants from these two groups mentioned external support networks. Their responses to questions related to relational factors and the creation of their concept maps were focused on family, teams, and their managers.

Medium High Grit and Resilience Scores

Willy had a third circle on the concept map he created, called, “my external network” and an equal sized additional circle for high performing team. When asked about his external network, Willy commented:

This is a network that I have created for myself. It includes, former colleagues from companies I have worked with in the past, a share group that I belong to that includes other people in the industry that have a similar role to mine, and vendors that I have worked with throughout my career or one’s that I work with currently. This network provides me with opportunities to learn from others, brainstorm ideas, gives me a group to bounce ideas off of, and the opportunity to broaden my perspective.

High Grit and Resilience Scores

Mary had a circle on her concept map titled, “external providers.” She shared how this network is becoming less critical for her as her kids are getting older. Although she remarked that this group of providers enabled her to focus on her job during the day and not have to worry about her family and her home over the past 10 years. She explained the role these providers played in her ability to thrive:

Another important relationship for me is with what I will call ‘external providers.’ As a working mom with three kids I need the help of our nanny and our house cleaner. If I didn’t have their help and support, I would not be able to thrive at work. And my

smallest circle is my yoga instructor, since I work long, hard hours, I need some ‘me’ time and my yoga instructor helps me get this time for myself.

Another study participant, Kiki, had a circle called “external network.” When the researcher asked her to clarify this circle, Kiki explained:

This external network is important because it allows me to connect with people outside this company who do similar work to mine. I know they face some of the same challenges, so we can talk about these things together.

Research Question 3

How do participants describe the organizational factors that relate to their ability to thrive at work?

Theme 5. Organizational Factors that Lead to Thriving are a Sense of Resolve and

Determination. These organizational factors were mentioned through words and phrases such as purpose, feeling valued, shared goals, taking risks, and succeeding. In the ranking exercise the study participants were asked first to use the list provided of five common organizational factors linked to thriving through research. The list included, receiving feedback, purpose, personal learning, well-being support, and feeling valued. Second, the study participants were asked to develop their own set of five organizational factors, and third to rank all 10 factors in the order of importance to them and their ability to thrive. In the interview, they were asked to provide their ranked list of 10 factors, to provide an explanation of why they chose those specific factors, and explain what factors were their first five. A complete list of the 12 study participants’ rankings was developed and are listed from most important to least important (Appendix I).

Low Grit and Resilience Scores

Zulu had the sense of resolve and determination theme included in her top five list beginning with her third ranked factor, feeling valued. She explained:

Feeling valued is high on my list because I want to work at a place where I feel I am adding value to the organization and this value is being recognized.

Additionally, purpose made it onto Zulu's list of top five, coming in at number five. She explained that having a purpose meant, "making a difference," which was critical to her.

Tina included the factor, feeling valued, in her list of top five and ranked this factor as number four.

This theme of resolve and determination was evident with Chris' interview responses and rankings. He had purpose as his number two ranked organizational factor and explained, "without purpose, you are going nowhere." He also had clear goals, ranked third and risk taking, ranked fourth. He gave this thorough explanation of why risk taking was important:

Taking intelligent risk is very important for success. You need to be able to 'fail fast' which means to go do something, if it doesn't work, figure out why and then figure out how to do it better in the future.

Medium Low Grit and Resilience Scores

Bob ranked purpose number two, he ranked realistic and obtainable expectations, number four, and ranked feeling valued number five. He talked about these rankings and why he chose this list:

Purpose is so important to me. Serving men and women in [my group] is so much bigger than just a sales target. When these men and women are representing our country

overseas, and I can provide them with products that give them a sense of being back home, then I have accomplished so much. This gives me purpose and helps me thrive.

I chose realistic and obtainable expectations as number four because if goals are not realistic it is hard to thrive. Feeling valued is in my top five because if the value I bring to the organization is not recognized, then I feel I am not doing my job.

Nora had purpose and succeeding in her top five rankings. When asked why purpose was so important to her and to be ranked number one, she responded:

I need to understand my purpose and why I am being asked to do my job. If I understand the purpose of my role and the value that I can bring to the business, then I can be sure to meet these expectations and do my job well.

Lefty chose purpose as his number two ranking and explained that he would not be doing this job if he did not feel it had purpose and could help others in some way, even if it is just to put a smile on their face.

Medium High Grit and Resilience Scores

Susie's sense of resolve and determination was demonstrated through her list of top five organizational factors. She ranked feeling valued as her number two factor, and decision making authority and responsible risk taking as her number four and number five, respectively. When asked to explain these rankings, she said:

There are two things that I have to do in my job each day and it is important that I do them well. The first is I have to be able to make decisions quickly. I am often called by R&D or packaging and am asked to make a decision in the moment on a formula or packaging issue. I have to use my experience and sometimes my intuition to make quick quality decisions. The second thing is taking responsible risks. I often have to take risks

with these quick decisions and need to be able to quickly consider the benefits and costs. I need to have the support of the business and the support of my line manager to feel comfortable making these decisions and taking these risks. I absolutely love this part of my job and get a real rush from this.

Purpose was ranked number four on Sarah's list of top five. Sarah said she feels that everything she does has a purpose. She explained that sometimes it is as simple as providing a report that allows someone the opportunity to perform analysis that informs better decisions. Sarah did not have any of the other words and phrases attributed to a sense of resolve and determination in her list of top five.

Purpose and feeling valued were ranked number three and four for Willy. He talked in the interview about having worked for other companies in the past that did not have a clear and meaningful purpose. Therefore, having a defined purpose was something he felt good about with this Fortune 500 Company. Additionally, he explained that being appreciated and recognized for adding value to the business helped him desire to go above and beyond what was expected of him in his role.

High Grit and Resilience Scores

Warren ranked purpose number two on his top five list. He talked about the importance for him of feeling he is making a difference. Mary ranked having clear direction as number two and explained that it was important for her to understand what was expected of her in order for her to do her job well and exceed expectations of others. Kiki ranked feeling valued number one on her list of top five. Kiki explained:

I need to know that what I do matters and that I am here working for a reason. I want to make a difference in the lives of others and feel good about my work. This is why I love my job. I have the opportunity to help others learn and grow.

Theme 6: Organizational Factors of Thriving Involve Work-Life Integration - Time for Yourself and for Others. The study participants identified factors such as time for personal learning, time to focus on health and well-being, work/life balance, and taking responsibility for self as organizational factors that enabled them to thrive at work.

Low Grit and Resilience Scores

Zulu ranked health and well-being as the number four organizational factor important to her ability to thrive. Tina ranked flexibility as her number two factor and explained:

Flexibility is so critical to me to be my best self. I am a mother and a wife and I need to be able to have balance in my life. I want to be able to go to my kid's games and school events, and I need a work environment that supports this balance.

Chris did not have these factors related to time and space for self and others ranked in his top five.

Medium Low Grit and Resilience Scores

Bob had responsibility ranked number one on his list, and related this to ensuring he understood his responsibilities and the expectations of him so that he could put together the right plan for himself and take ownership of his work.

Nora had personal learning and well-being support as numbers three and four in her list of top five. Nora said it was important for her to always continue learning. Also, she talked about the need to feel supported from a health and wellness perspective. She said she felt this

was a strength of this organization, as great health and wellness opportunities were offered to employees along with great benefits.

Lefty was a former college athlete; therefore, well-being support in the form of encouraging good health and exercise are essential to his ability to thrive. He explained that being fit and feeling healthy had always been a part of his life and this helped him be able to thrive at work. He ranked health and well-being as number one on his list and had personal learning ranked at number five. He talked about the opportunities that he has received in his career with this company to continue to learn and grow. He said he appreciated the investment that company has made in him as an individual.

Medium High Grit and Resilience Scores

Flexibility was ranked number one for Susie. She explained what flexibility meant to her:

I bought a home in South Carolina that I plan to use for my retirement. I want to begin spending part of my time in this home now. I spoke to my boss about this and he is going to allow me to work 6 months a year in New Jersey and 6 months a year in South Carolina. This is flexibility and having the support of this company to work at two different locations makes me feel so good about this business and makes me want to do my very best.

Susie had well-being support ranked number three and noted that she prioritized her health and felt supported by the organization to be healthy. She said she uses the workout facilities at work often and appreciates that this is made available to her.

Responsibility was ranked number three and personal learning was ranked number five for Sarah. In terms of responsibility Sarah described this as taking responsibility for yourself and

your actions and ensuring you are doing your work to the best of your ability. Sarah considers taking responsibility as one of her strengths.

Willy ranked work/life balance as number one, personal learning as number two, and well-being support as number five. This theme of having space and time for yourself and others is strong for Willy in enabling him to thrive, as described:

Work/life balance is so important for me. If I know I have the support from the company to balance my time between my family and my work, this helps me be my best self both at work and at home. Other companies I have worked with in the past, did not offer this opportunity for work/life balance. As for personal learning, I love the opportunity to learn new things. I tend to become stagnant and get bored when I am doing the same thing for too long. When this has happened to me at this organization, I have been able to take on new projects and tasks that have helped me continue to learn new things.

Well-being support is about having the right benefits and health care plan to be able to maintain your health. If you don't have your health, you can't thrive.

High Grit and Resilience Scores

Warren did not have any of the words or phrases from this theme of having space and time for yourself and others in his top five list.

Flexibility was listed as number three for Mary. She explained:

I don't like to have to punch a clock or feel like I am being watched each day. I appreciate the ability that I have to flex my schedule when needed so that I can take my kids or myself to the doctor. Also, I am given the opportunity to work from home when needed. This is very important to me and helps me to feel good about the organization and be able to thrive.

Kiki also rated flexibility as number three and had similar explanations as Mary. She ranked opportunities to grow as number four and personal learning as number five. She explained why this are ranked high on her list:

Work flexibility is important to me because I travel quite a bit in my role. So, being able to work from home when I am not traveling and having time for exercise during the day helps make me feel whole...I ranked opportunities to grow and personal learning in my top five because if I am not growing I feel I am becoming stagnant. One of my favorite things to do each year is to attend either an industry conference or become certified in a new coaching tool or talent development process, I look forward to these opportunities and work hard to bring this learning back to the business and apply it in my work.

Chapter Summary

The researcher transcribed the 12 interviews line by line and collated the words and phrases from the social artifact exercises. Member checks were completed. Coding was completed using an iterative process. First and second round coding was completed with the interview transcripts and the collated exercises. The next iteration involved highlighting key words and phrases, reclassification and filtering of first round coding, and making connections between the categories to begin to identify emergent themes and patterns. The third iteration involved application to the data set and concluded with the significance of the findings outlined: Positive connections, support of family and coworkers, passion, a sense of resolve and determination, and time for self and others lead to thriving in a Fortune 500 Company.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Chapter 1 presented the researcher's introduction to the topic, the qualitative case study approach of grit, resilience, and employee perceptions of thriving in a Fortune 500 Company. This chapter also included the data production and collection methods. Chapters 2 and 3 presented the review of literature and the chosen research methodology for the research study. Chapter 4 outlined the emergent themes associated with the research questions as well as, the interview and exercise results and analysis. The study's summary, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for practice and further research are outlined and discussed in Chapter 5.

Grit, resilience, and thriving have been researched broadly in the discipline of higher education. Thriving constructs have been developed through existing research. Little research exists related to the traits of grit and resilience and the constructs of thriving in a corporate work environment. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe the ability to thrive at work for current employees in a Fortune 500 Company in New Jersey. Informing this study's findings are the copious and detailed documented perceptions of factors critical to thriving for the 12 research study participants who work in the Fortune 500 Company. The results provide an understanding of the potential factors and constructs that enable employees to thrive in a corporate work environment.

Conclusions

This qualitative case study investigation was guided by three research questions. The researcher derived meaning from researcher field notes and memos, interview transcripts, concept maps, and ranking exercises that were completed by the research study participants. This informed perceptions of thriving in a Fortune 500 Company with study participants of varying assessed levels of grit and resilience. Data triangulation was completed among the three types of data collected: interviews, concepts maps, and a ranking exercise. The credibility and dependability of the study was improved by the use of multiple data sources and through completion of member checks with the 12 research study participants.

For the purpose of the study ability to thrive at work was defined as: 1) individual factors related to a growth mindset and positive perspective at work (Dweck, 2006; Schreiner, 2010); 2) relational factors related to social connectedness and professional network (Schreiner, 2010); and, 3) organizational factors related to engaged learning through professional development opportunities, coaching, feedback, defined purpose, and well-being (Schreiner, 2010; Spreitzer & Porath, 2012; Spreitzer & Sutcliffe, 2007). Through research conducted in the discipline of higher education, thriving has been defined as a distinct construct that includes (1) engaged learning, (2) academic determination, (3) positive perspective, (4) diverse citizenship, and (5) social connectedness (Schriener, 2010). These constructs were used to develop recommendations for interventions to improve educational environments to equip students to thrive.

The researcher identified connections from the codes developed and the patterns that emerged in the research study to supporting literature and past research in the areas of higher education and corporate organizations. Therefore, the conclusions and findings may be used to

inform leaders of corporate organizations on the types of programs and interventions that could be implemented to improve employee satisfaction and led to a thriving work environment.

Additionally, the conclusions and findings may be used to direct future research on the topic of thriving in corporate organizations. The conclusions are provided as follows, beginning with the findings and conclusions for the general interview questions and then for the three research questions. The researcher completed analysis and coding of the data collectively as well as in consideration of the maximum variation sampling strategy.

General Interview Questions

How would you define thriving?

The 12 research study participants used similar words and phrases to define thriving. The words and phrases they used most consistently included the following: doing your best, having passion, and learning. This is consistent with the factors the study participants described as enabling them to thrive at work. Additionally, these factors connect to the research of Schreiner (2010), and identified thriving constructs of: academic determination (doing your best), positive perspective (having passion), and engaged learning (learning).

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your ability to thrive every day?

The average response of the 12 study participants was an 8.1 out of 10 with a range that spanned from 4 to 10. This response was indicative of the overwhelmingly positive language used and attitudes demonstrated, throughout the 12 interviews. The study participants spoke favorably of the Fortune 500 Company and the opportunities provided by the organization. Several of the study participants mentioned a recent reorganization that had taken place a few months before the interviews. The study participants discussed their apprehension about moving

into and learning new roles, but this discussion was in the context of wanting to learn the new role quickly in order to bring value and productivity to the organization. Duckworth (2016) found that resilient employees look to the future and maintain their productivity through uncertain times despite facing daily frustrations. The participants in this study of employees at a Fortune 500 Company demonstrated behaviors consistent with those of resilient employees from similar research studies.

Research Question 1

How do participants describe the individual factors that relate to their ability to thrive at work?

Collective perceptions, findings, and conclusions from the 12 research study participants

Cameron (2012) found that leaders who work to build positive, trusting relationships among their teams can lead to thriving and interpersonal flourishing. The research findings in the present study support this assertion as a majority (10 of 12) of the study participants discussed the importance of positive connections and support from others. The study participants described this support and trust from their teams and their boss as being critical to their ability to thrive.

Leveraging passion and experience were factors mentioned throughout the interviews and social artifact exercises, leading to thriving. The study participants talked of having pride and passion, learning and growing, being stretched and challenged and being recognized as an expert. Spreitzer and Porath (2012) identified two components of thriving: vitality and learning. Vitality was defined as, “the sense of being alive, passionate and excited” and learning defined as, “growth that comes from obtaining new knowledge and skills” (Speitzer & Porath, 2012, p.4). The factors of vitality and learning from prior research are strongly connected to the patterns of

pride, passion, and learning found with the 12 study participants from this corporate organization.

Low Grit and Resilience Scores

The study participants with low grit and resilience scores had similar responses to the other study respondents regarding the factor of positive connections and support from others. Differences were noted in the factor of leveraging passion and experience. None of the study participants with low grit and resilience scores mentioned leveraging passion and experience as an individual factor that helped them thrive at work. Speitzer and Porath (2012) acknowledged that some employees naturally thrive, bringing learning and vitality to work every day, while others need motivation and inspiration from others to maintain enthusiasm and to thrive. This need for motivation and inspiration from others for the group with low grit and resilience scores could be related to research on external and internal locus of control by Rotter (1954). Additional research would be required to understand whether lower levels of grit and resilience are correlated with lower ability to leveraging passion and experience.

Medium Low Grit and Resilience Scores

The participants with medium low grit and resilience scores found the factor of positive connections and support from others important to their ability to thrive. Additionally, one of the three participants in this group described leveraging passion and experience as an important factor to the ability to thrive.

Medium High Grit and Resilience Scores

As the grit and resilience scores rose, similarly, participant language from this group focused more on positive connections and support from others and also included an emphasis on leveraging passion and experience. Two of the three participants in this group identified positive

connections and support from others important to thriving, but in their descriptions of this factor they spoke more intrinsically focused with words and phrases such as, “helpful support in tough situations” and “enjoying these new connections as opportunities to continue to learn,” whereas, the low and medium low grit and resilience scored participants described this factor with more extrinsically focused words and phrases such as, “the team helps me get excited about coming into work each day” and “we are there for each other, no matter what.”

The descriptions used by the study participants with medium high grit and resilience scores on the factor, leveraging passion, and experience included words and phrases that demonstrated a growth mindset. Growth mindset is defined as “perceiving a challenge as an opportunity to learn rather than an obstacle to overcome” (Dweck, 2006, p12). A growth mindset is the starting point to building grit and resilience (Dweck, 2006). The growth mindset words and phrases these participants used, included “there are very few problems I can’t solve,” “when things go wrong, I self-assess, work things through and stay positive,” and “I get stale if I am in the same role for too long, I have a burning desire to be skilled.”

High Grit and Resilience Scores

Positive connections and support from others are important to the participants with high grit and resilience scores and tended to extend beyond positive connections and support from family, boss, and coworkers to positive connections and support from customers and senior leaders.

Resilient employees do not focus on barriers or failures, are productive through uncertainty, and have fun despite everyday frustrations (Vitality, 2013). This was evidenced in the responses of the study participants with high grit and resilience scores, as they described why leveraging passion and experience is important for them: “I always try to have a great attitude,

no matter what has happened. I have learned that having passion for your work is important in dealing with day to day issues.” Another respondent added, “for me it is all about learning and what can I learn from this tough situation.”

A theme that emerged from this analysis of data was that the higher the grit and resilience scores for the study participants from the Fortune 500 Company, the individual factor of *positive connections and support from others* becomes more expansive and inclusive. Additionally, participants with higher grit and resilience offered more intrinsically focused descriptions of thriving and more frequently used language that demonstrated a growth mindset.

Research Question 2

What relational factors do participants describe as important for the ability to thrive at work?

Collective perceptions, findings, and conclusions from the 12 research study participants

The results of the concept map exercise demonstrated the importance of having family and caring coworker support in addition to external support networks in place to thrive at work in the Fortune 500 Company. All 12 study participants when asked about relational factors that help them thrive included as the largest circle on their concept map, either, family, boss or coworkers (team), and six study participants identified external support networks.

These results are consistent with research from two different studies. Findings from the Thriving Quotient research identified social connectedness as a construct of thriving (Schreiner, 2010). Additionally, Schreiner et al. (2009) found that interpersonal relationships were a predictive thriving construct leading to success and thriving in college students.

Schmidt and Nourse (2016) identified six resilience-building strategies used by successful women. One of the strategies outlined in the study was to strengthen and extend support networks to include: work, personal, professional, industry, and sector (Schmidt &

Norse, 2016). External support networks were identified as important to half of the study participants and included examples similar to the extended network identified by prior research.

Low Grit and Resilience Scores and Medium Low Grit and Resilience Scores

Study participants with low and medium low grit and resilience scores relied on the relational factor of family support and caring coworkers (boss) to enable them to thrive. The descriptions of why this factor was important to them is consistent with the research on thriving from studies that sampled students in higher education as well as research using corporate employees. In regard to relational factors that lead to thriving, none of the study participants with low or medium low grit and resilience scores included the factor of an external network of support on their concept map or in the interviews. One explanation may be that expanding an external network requires motivation and effort. Study participants with low grit and resilience scores may not see the value in extending these efforts or may not be aware of the benefits that an expanded network would provide.

Medium High Grit and Resilience Scores and High Grit and Resilience Scores

Consistent with the other study participants, family and caring coworkers (boss) support was important to enable thriving within the medium high and high grit and resilience scoring participants. In addition to family and caring coworkers, external network support was included in the concept maps and interviews with these study participants. Some examples of extended network individuals listed included, former colleagues, vendors, share groups, nannies, house cleaners, yoga instructors, and others.

The conclusion from this finding is that employees with higher grit and resilience scores in the corporate organization tend to more frequently acknowledge the broadened support networks they enjoy beyond family and immediate teams to include external support. These

extended networks provide the participants with opportunities to learn, brainstorm ideas, share struggles, broaden perspective, gain additional support, and build social connections. One explanation may be that higher grit and resilience levels within individuals are indicative of more motivation to embrace external network opportunities and greater awareness of the value of these efforts.

Research Question 3

How do participants describe the organizational factors that relate to their ability to thrive at work?

The organizational factors identified as most important to the 12 research study participants formed the two patterns of *sense of resolve and determination* and *time for self and others*. These organizational factors were consistent among the top five rankings within the ranking exercise as well as within the responses to the interview questions.

Spreitzer and Porath (2014) linked self-determination theories to the concept of thriving. Specifically the research linked one of the self-determination theory concepts, autonomous motivation, to thriving. Autonomous motivation is defined as “a sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness” (p. 248). A sense of autonomy is “feeling free from external control”; relatedness was defined as, “positive relations with others”, and competence was defined as, “managing one’s life and surrounding world” (Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 248). The organizational factors that emerged from the present study supports prior research on this topic because study participants used similar words and phrases to demonstrate the self-motivation type behaviors found within autonomous motivation. When asked to explain why the organizational factors that were important to enable a thriving work environment, examples of this connection included self-motivated words and phrases such as “I am making a difference,”

“taking intelligent risk is important, if it doesn’t work, figure out why,” “I need to be able to make decisions quickly,” “I need to be able to put together a plan for myself and take ownership of my work,” “I always continue learning,” “taking responsibility for yourself and your actions,” and “I have been able to take on new projects and new tasks.”

The third research question in the study focused on the organizational factors that relate to thriving at work. No identifiable differences emerged between the grit and resilience scores of the 12 study participants, meaning that across all levels of employees, similar words, phrases, explanations, and ranking orders were found between and within the maximum variation sample.

One explanation for the common themes across all groups could be that the question related to the organization involves less personal thought and reflection than questions related to individual and relational factors. Additionally, the researcher provided the top five organizational factors consistently referenced in previous research related to organizational thriving (purpose, learning, well-being, feedback, and feeling valued) as a part of the ranking exercise. Therefore, these five factors were included in each study participant’s list, with varying order, creating more consistency in the responses overall and perhaps influencing the way the individuals discussed the organizational factors in the interviews with more consistency.

Implications for Practice

The findings from this study demonstrate the following factors lead to thriving of the employees of the Fortune 500 Company: positive connections, support of family, coworkers, and support of others, shared passion, sense of resolve and determination, and time for self and others. Organizations with thriving employees are flexible and respond appropriately and quickly to uncertainty. Because thriving employees are continuously learning, capabilities are being built that enable innovative problem solving and quick reactions to challenges or crises.

Thriving employees are healthier, and therefore, reduce health care costs within organizations (Speitzer & Sutcliffe, 2007). Leaders of corporate organizations are seeking ways to improve turnover rates, engagement, and productivity within the workforce (Wanburg & Banas, 2000). The following recommendations based on the findings from this study can contribute to building grit, resilience, and thriving in employees of corporate organizations:

- Scholars have demonstrated that a growth mindset as well as the traits of grit and resilience can be taught (Dweck, 2016; Gamel, 2014). The present study demonstrates the importance of a growth mindset, grit, and resilience to thriving for employees in corporate settings. Therefore, organizational leaders should invest in developing programs for employees that assess and teach skills related to fostering a growth mindset and implement methods for improving grit and resilience for individuals;
- Leaders should consider incorporating grit and resilience assessments into onboarding processes to begin to build higher levels of grit and resilience from the onset;
- Organizational leaders need to work to foster a positive work climate, build high performing teams that support one another, and model positive family support;
- Organizational leaders should encourage workers to develop a network of external support by providing space and time for workers to get involved in external working groups, industry groups, and support groups (i.e. working women support groups, minority support groups, well-being support groups, etc.);
- Passion and engagement are contagious (Spreitzer & Porath, 2012). Organizational leaders should use passionate and engaged employees to inspire and engage others and consider rewards for passion and engagement demonstrated in employees;

- Organizational leaders should empower employee decision-making and should reward employees for taking responsible risks. Additionally, employees who want to experience improved thriving should seek out roles with more decision-making authority, find opportunities to take risks, build their competence through the role, and build a sense of community within their teams; and,
- Leaders should encourage employees to take time to learn, grow, and participate in well-being activities. Furthermore, providing flexible work hours enables employees to go to doctor appointments, attend school programs and events in support of their families. Work-life integration leads to thriving employees and the present research supports this assertion.

Implications for Future Research

The research study included a single Fortune 500 Company headquartered in New Jersey. The sample was limited to employees who had completed both the 14-item Adversity Quotient (AQ) Profile and the 10-item Grit Gauge over the last 5 years. The findings are not generalizable to other Fortune 500 Companies. Additional qualitative studies of similar nature with other organizations, involving different samples are encouraged.

Different grit and resilience assessments exist and have been included in past research. Replicating a similar study using different grit and resilience assessments and extending the sample to include multiple corporate organizations could yield additional insights and expand the outlook and findings of future studies. Additionally, a mixed methods study including quantitative data related to grit, resilience and thriving, along with qualitative data collection methods would allow for analysis and exploration to provide a broadened perspective of the research topic and reduce any researcher biases. Recommendations for additional future research include:

- Comparing employee perceptions of thriving at for-profit institutions versus nonprofit institutions;
- Longitudinal research related to the career impact over time of grit and resilience training and assessment scores in Fortune 500 Companies;
- Longitudinal research to measure the turnover rates of employees with the lowest and highest grit and resilience scores in a Fortune 500 Company;
- Evaluation of the impact of applied findings from thriving research;
- Comparisons of thriving constructs from various research studies; and,
- Longitudinal research on the impact of growth mindset, grit, and resilience training with a group of elementary aged children through adulthood.

The researcher recommends mixed methods, qualitative and quantitative research designs to thoroughly explore the concepts of grit, resilience, and thriving in higher education institutions and corporate organizations.

REFERENCES

- Abid G., Zahra, I., & Ahmed, A. (2016). Promoting thriving at work and waning retention: A relational perspective. *Future Business Journal*, 2(2), 127-137. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fbj.2016.08.001>
- Adkins, A. (2015). Employee engagement in U.S. stagnant in 2015. *Gallup Organization*. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/188144/employee-engagement-stagnant-2015.aspx>
- Anfara, V., Brown, K., & Mangione, T. (2002). Qualitative analysis on stage: Making the research process more public. *Sage Journals*. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3102/0013189X031007028>
- Arceo-Dumlao, T. (2016, February 1). Developing true grit, resilience at work. *Business Inquirer*. Retrieved from <http://business.inquirer.net/206440/developing-true-grit-resilience-at-work>
- Arouty, D. (2015). *Does character matter?: The role of grit and resilience in predicting academic success* (Doctoral dissertation). Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY.
- Bean, J. P., & Eaton, S. B. (2000). A psychosocial model of college student retention. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp. 48-61). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Benson, P. L. & Scales, P. C. (2009). The definition and preliminary measurements of thriving in adolescence. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 4(1), 85-104. doi:10.1080/17439760802399240
- Bergland, A., & Kirkevold, M. (2001). Thriving—a useful theoretical perspective to capture the experience of well-being among frail elderly in nursing homes? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 36 (3), 426-432.
- Bernard, R. (2000). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bowman, N. (2010). Assessing learning and development among diverse college students. In S. Herzong, (Ed.), *New directions for institutional research: No. 145. Diversity and educational Benefits* (pp. 53-71). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Braxton, J. M. (2000). *Reworking the departure puzzle*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Broering-Jacobs, C. (2016). *Using grit and growth mindset to foster resilience and professionalism in law students and attorneys*. Paper presented at the Law Faculty Presentations and Testimony. Paper 57. Retrieved from http://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/fac_presentations/57

- Carver, C. (1998). Resilience and thriving: Issues, models and linkages. *Journal of Social Issues*, 54 (2), 245-266.
- Cameron, K., & Dutton, J., (2003). *Positive organizational scholarship: Foundations of a new discipline*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Cameron, K. (2012). *Positive leadership: Strategies for extraordinary performance*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Carucci, R. (2015, July 28). When people thrive in organizations [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.navalent.com/resources/blog/when-people-thrive-organizations>
- Cassidy, S. (2015). Resilience building in students: The role of academic self-efficacy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, 1781. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01781>
- Chang, W. (2014). Grit and academic performance: Is being grittier better? *Open Access Dissertations*. Paper 1306. Retrieved from http://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_dissertations
- Charmez, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cogswell, E. (2016). Dr. Paul Stoltz talks grit at nerdnation 2016. *The Reach*. Retrieved from <https://www.ptk.org/Default.aspx?TabId=4153&PostId=34>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cross, T. M. (2013). *Staying the course: Grit, academic success, and non-traditional doctoral students*. Paper presented at SoTL Commons Conference. Paper 95. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/sotlcommons/SoTL/2014/95>
- Davis, M., Luecken, L. and Lemery-Chalfant, K. (2009). Resilience in common life: Introduction to the special issue. *Journal of Personality*, 77, 1637–1644. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6494.2009.00595
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2003). *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues (2nd edition)*. London, UK. Sage.
- Diener, E., & Seligman, M., (2004). Beyond money: Toward an economy of well-being. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 5(1): 1-31.
- Dockterman, D., & Blackwell, L. (2014). Growth mindset in context content and culture matter too. *International Center for Leadership in Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.leadered.com/pdf/GrowthMindset.pdf>
- Duckworth, A. (2016). *Grit: the power of passion and perseverance*. New York, NY: Scribner.
- Duckworth, A. L, Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and

- passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(6), 1087-1101. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.92.6.1087
- Duckworth, A. L., & Quinn, P. D. (2009). Development and validation of the short grit scale (Grit-S). *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 91(2), 166-174. doi: 10.1080/00223890802634290
- Duke, W. (2017). Organizational grit – if people can be gritty, can teams? *Richtopia*. Retrieved from <https://richtopia.com/effective-leadership/grit>
- Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York, NY. Random House.
- Dweck, C., Walton, G., & Cohen, G. (2014). Academic tenacity: Mindsets and skills that promote long-term learning. *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*. Retrieved from <https://ed.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/manual/dweck-walton-cohen-2014.pdf>
- Eccles, J., & Gootman, J., (2002). *Community programs to promote youth development/committee on community-level programs for youth*. Washington DC: National Academy Press.
- Freeman, L. (2004). The power and benefits of concept mapping: measuring use, usefulness, ease of use, and satisfaction. *International Journal of Scientific Education*. 26 (2). 151-169.
- Gallup News. (2012). *State of the American workplace*. Retrieved from <http://news.gallup.com/reports/199961/7.aspx>
- Gamel, M. (2014). *Impact of character development and empowerment program on grit and resilience growth in early and middle adolescents* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1651&context=etd>
- Greenbank, P. (2003). The role of value in educational research: The case for reflexivity. *British Education Research Journal*. 29 (6). 791-801.
- Guetzkow, H. (1950), Unitizing and categorizing problems in coding qualitative data. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. (6). 47–58.
- Harper, M., & Cole, P. (2012). Member checking: Can benefits be gained similar to group therapy? *The Qualitative Report*, 17 (2), 510-517. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol17/iss2/1>
- Harter, J., Schmidt, F., & Keyes, C. (2003) Well-Being in the workplace and its relationship to business outcomes: A review of the gallup studies. In: Keyes, C.L.M. and Haidt, J., Eds., *Flourishing: Positive Psychology and the Life Well-Lived*, *American Psychological Association*, Washington DC, 205-224. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/10594-009>
- Hightman, C., Hogan, M., & Larkin-Wong, K. (2017). *The grit project: program toolkit*. The American Bar Association (ABA) Commission on Women in the Profession. Retrieved from https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/marketing/women/grit_brochure.authcheckdam.pdf

- Howell, A., (2009). Flourishing: Achievement related correlates of student well-being. *The journal of positive psychology*. 4 (1). 1-13.
- Kelly Global Workforce Index. (2013). Global trends that shaped job force recruitment and workplace performance. Retrieved from https://insights.ethisphere.com/wp-content/uploads/Kelly-Workplace_Performance_andIndex_.pdf
- Keyes, C., & Haidt, J., (2003). *Flourishing: Positive psychology and the life well lived*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- King, P. E., & Benson, P. L. (2006). Spiritual development and adolescent well-being and thriving. *The handbook of spiritual development in childhood and adolescence*, 384-398.
- Kuh, G., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J., & Whitt, E., (2005). Never let it rest: Lessons about student success from high-performing colleges and universities. *Change*. 44-51. Retrieved from [http://cpr.indiana.edu/uploads/Kuh,%20Kinzie,%20Schuh,%20Whitt%20\(2005\)%20Never%20Let%20It%20Rest.pdf](http://cpr.indiana.edu/uploads/Kuh,%20Kinzie,%20Schuh,%20Whitt%20(2005)%20Never%20Let%20It%20Rest.pdf)
- Lechner, T. (2017). *Resilience and grit: How to develop a growth mindset*. The Chopra Center. Retrieved from <http://www.chopra.com/articles/resilience-and-grit-how-to-develop-a-growth-mindset#sm.0001cj9jqaks3f9ts3e20qljbtr7s>
- Lerner, R., Dowling, E., Anderson, P., (2003). Positive youth development: Thriving as a basis of personhood and civil society. *Applied Developmental Science*. 7 (3). 172-180.
- Lerner, R., Lerner, J., Theokas, C., Jelecic, H., Gestsdottir, S., Alberts, A., Ma, L., Christiansen, E., Almerigi, J., Warren, D. Naudeau, S., Simpson, I., Smith, L. M., & Bentley, A. (2006). Towards a new vision and vocabulary about adolescence: Theoretical and empirical bases of a “positive youth development” perspective. In: L. Balter, & C. S. Tamis-LeMonda (Eds.). *Child psychology: A handbook of contemporary issues*. New York, NY: Psychology Press/Taylor und Francis.
- Lewis, K. (2014, March). True grit: How you can build resilience to thrive in the most challenging times. *Human Resource Director*. Retrieved from <http://www.hcamag.com/hr-resources/leadership/true-grit-how-you-can-build-resilience-to-thrive-in-the-most-challenging-of-times-185723.aspx>
- McNamara, C. (2009). General guidelines for conducting interviews. Retrieved January 11, 2018, from <http://managementhelp.org/evaluatn/intrview.htm>
- McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education evidence-based inquiry* (7th edition.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- National Urban League (2007). *The state of black America 2007: Portrait of the black male*. Silver Springs, MD: Beckman.
- Novak, J. D., & Gowin, D. B. (1984). *Learning how to learn*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Novak, J. D., & Canas, A. J. (2008). The theory underlying concept maps and how to construct

- and use them. *Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition*, 1-36. Retrieved from <http://eprint.ihmc.us/5/2/TheoryUnderlyingConceptMaps.pdf>
- Palmer, R., & Strayhorn, T., (2008). Mastering one's own fate: Non-cognitive factors associated with success of African American males at HBCU. *NASAP*, 11 (1). 126-143.
- Parthasarathy, N., Chakraborty, P. (2014). *Grit as a dominant leadership trait in the corporate world*. Paper presented at GlobSyn Management Conference 2014. New Delhi: India. Allied.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. (3rd ed.). Chicago, IL: Sage.
- Patton, M.Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods (4th edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Prince-Embury, S., Courville, T. (2008a). Comparison of a one, two and three factor models of the Resiliency scales for children and adolescents. *The Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, 23(1), 11-25.
- Quinn, R.E. (1996). *Deep change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Richardson, G.E., Neiger, B.L., Jensen, S., & Kumpfer, K.L. (1990). The resiliency model. *Health Education*, 21(6), 33-39. Retrieved June 3, 2017 from <http://web.utk.edu/~ewbrewer/pdf/articles/The%20Literature%20of%20Resiliency.pdf>
- Robbins, S. Lauver, K., Le, H., Davis, D., Langley, R., & Carlstrom, A., (2004). Do psychosocial and study skill factors predict college outcomes? *Journal Psychological Bulletin*, 130 (2), 261-288.
- Robinson, J. (2010). The business case for well-being. *Business Journal*. Retrieved July 15, 2017 from <http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/139373/business-case-wellbeing.aspx>
- Rosales, R. (2017). Thriving at work: An outcome of positive leadership. *Positive Psychology News*. Retrieved July 15, 2017 from <http://positivepsychologynews.com/news/robert-rosales/2017031336682>
- Ryff, C.D., & Singer, B. (2003). Flourishing under fire: Resilience as a prototype of challenged thriving. In C.L.M. Keyes & Haidt J. (Ed.), *Flourishing: Positive psychology and the life well-lived* (pp.15-36). Washington, DC: APA.
- Saldana, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Salles, A., Cohen, G. L., & Mueller, C. M. (2014). The relationship between grit and resident well-being. *The American Journal of Surgery*, 207(2), 251-254.

- Schmidt, L., & Nourse, K. (2016). *Shift to thrive: Six strategies for women to unlock the power of resiliency*. Washington, DC: Bobo.
- Schreiner, L. A. (2010), The “thriving quotient”: A new vision for student success. *About Campus*, 15: 2–10. doi:10.1002/abc.20016
- Schreiner, L. A., McIntosh, E. J., Cuevas, A. E. P., & Kalinkewicz, L. (2013). *Measuring the malleable: Expanding the assessment of student success*. Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education, St. Louis, MO. Retrieved from <http://www.thrivingcollege.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/ASHE-Measuring-the-Malleable-Schreiner-et-al.-FINAL.pdf>
- Schreiner, L. A., McIntosh, E. J., Nelson, D., & Pothoven, S. (2009). *The Thriving Quotient: Advancing the assessment of student success*. Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Vancouver, BC. Retrieved from http://thrivingcollege.org/Thriving_in_College/DL_files/TQ_ASHE_2009_1.pdf
- Schreiner, L. A., Pothoven, S., Nelson, D., & McIntosh, E. J. (2009). *College student thriving: Predictors of success and retention*. Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Vancouver, BC.
- Seidman, I. E. (1991). *Interviewing as qualitative research*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Seligman, M. (2006). *Learned Optimism*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Seligman, M. (2007). *The optimistic child: A proven program to safeguard children against depression and build lifelong resilience*. New York, NY: First Houghton Mifflin.
- Seligman, M. (2011). *Flourish: A new understanding of happiness, well-being-and how to achieve them*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Simon, M. (2011). Role of the researcher. *Dissertation Recipes*. Retrieved from <http://dissertationrecipes.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Role-of-the-Researcher.pdf>
- Simon, M. & Goes, J. (2012). *Dissertation and scholarly research: Recipes for success*. Create Space Independent Publishing Platform. Retrieved from <http://dissertationrecipes.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Phenomenological-Research.pdf>
- Singh, K., & Jha, S. D. (2008). Positive and negative affect, and grit as predictors of happiness and life satisfaction. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, 34(2), 40-45.
- Skinner, E., Pitzer, J., & Brule, H. (2014). The role of emotion in engagement, coping, and the development of motivational resilience. *International handbook of emotions in education*, 331-347.

- Sonenshein, S., Dutton, J., Grant, A., Speitzer, G., & Suttcliffe, K. (2006). *Narrating of growth at work: Rationalists and socio-emotionalists and logics of development working paper*. Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship. Ross School of Business, University of Michigan.
- Spreitzer, G. & Porath, C. (2012). Creating sustainable performance. *Harvard Business Review*, January-February, 2012. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2012/01/creating-sustainable-performance>
- Spreitzer, G. M., & Sutcliffe, K. (2007). *Thriving in organizations*. In D. Nelson & C. Cooper (Eds.), *Positive organizational behavior* (pp. 74–85). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stoltz, P. (1997). *Adversity quotient: Turning obstacles into opportunities*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Stoltz, P. (2015). An exploratory comparative analysis of the GRIT Gauge™ and the Duckworth Scale in student and employee samples. *Peak Learning*. Retrieved June 4, 2017 from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5409d83ee4b098a72ea8b9cd/t/56dd8ad420c647a2ce5bceb2/1457359574505/GRIT+Gauge+Duckworth+Study+Summary.pdf>
- Stoltz, P. (2015). Leadership grit: What new research reveals. *Leader to Leader*. 78 (3). 49-55.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2014). What role does grit play in academic success of black male collegians at predominately white institutions? *Journal of African American Studies*, 18(1), 1-10.
- Strycharczyk, D., & Clough, P. (2014). *Developing mental toughness in young people: Approaches to achievement, well-being, employability, and positive behavior*. London, UK: Karnac Books.
- Strycharczyk, D. & Elvin C. (2014). *Developing resilient organizations*. Philadelphia, PA: Kogan Page.
- Suzuki, Y., Tamesue, D., Asahi, K., & Ishikawa, Y. (2015). Grit and work engagement: A cross-sectional study. *PLoS ONE*, 10 (9), e0137501. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0137501>
- Taylor, S.J., & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons.
- Tufford, L., & Newman, P. (2010). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work*. 11. 80-96. doi:10.1177/1473325010368316.
- Venkatesh, J., Shivaranjani, G. (2015). Adversity quotient profile: An effective psychometric tool to hire the finest aspirant for contemporary organizations. *Scholars Journal of Business, Economics and Management*. 2(12), 1159-1164.
- Vitality. (2013). Facilitating resilience in the workplace. *Vitality, EFAP Newsletter*. 3 (4). 1-4.
- Vinothkumar, M. & Prasad, N. (2016). Moderating role of resilience in the relationship between grit and psychological well-being. *International Journal of Psychology and Psychiatry*. 4, 10. doi: 10.5958/2320-6233.2016.00009.2.

- Wanberg, C., & Banas, J. (2000). Predictors and outcomes of openness to changes in a reorganizing workplace. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85, 132-142. doi: 10.1037//0021-9010.85.1.13
- Walsh, J. P., Weber, K., & Margolis, J. D. (2003). Social issues and management: Our lost cause found. *Journal of Management*, 29(6), 859-881.
- Ward, S.F. (2017). Grit and a growth mindset are linked to success. *ABA Journal*. Retrieved from http://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/grit_growth_mindset_success
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods (3rd edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Young, D. G., Schreiner, L. A., & McIntosh, E. J. (2015). *Investigating sophomore student success: The National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives and the Sophomore Experiences Survey – 2014* (Research Report No. 6). Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

14 Item Adversity Quotient (AQ) Profile

The AQ Profile 9.2 includes 14 items that span a broad range of situations, ranging from minor annoyances to the death of a loved one, which are scored according to a proprietary algorithm across the four CORE dimensions of AQ. Participants are asked to rate based on a sliding scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (completely).

Sample items from the AQ Profile®:

1. You miss an important appointment.
 - a. To what extent can you influence what happens next?
 - b. How likely are you to do something to improve the situation?
 - c. This situation negatively affects?
 - d. How long will this situation negatively affect you?
2. Someone you care about gets very upset with you.
 - a. To what extent can you influence what happens next?
 - b. How likely are you to do something to improve the situation?
 - c. This situation negatively affects?
 - d. How long will this situation negatively affect you?
3. You suffer a financial setback.
 - a. To what extent can you influence what happens next?
 - b. How likely are you to do something to improve the situation?
 - c. This situation negatively affects?
 - d. How long will this situation negatively affect you?
4. The project you are working on is a total waste of time.
 - a. To what extent can you influence what happens next?
 - b. How likely are you to do something to improve the situation?
 - c. This situation negatively affects?
 - d. How long will this situation negatively affect you?

APPENDIX B

10 Item Grit Gauge

The Grit Gauge includes 10 items that span a broad range of situations that assess both one's self perception and one's best guess of other's GRIT-related perceptions, across Growth, Resilience, Instinct, Tenacity and Robustness, the qualitative dimensions of GRIT. Participants are asked to rate based on a sliding scale from 1 (never) to 10 (always).

Sample items from the GRIT Gauge®:

1. The people who know me best would say I...
 - a. Am too limited in my thinking
 - b. Respond poorly to diversity in my life
 - c. Give my full energy to whatever I choose to do
 - d. Give my all to everything I do

2. In comparison to everyone around me, over the course of my life I have faced:
 - a. The most difficulties
 - b. More difficulties than most people in my life
 - c. A normal, pretty average amount of difficulties
 - d. Fewer difficulties than most people in my life
 - e. The fewest difficulties

3. The people who know me best would say I ...
 - a. Seek new ideas
 - b. Put my full energy into what I do
 - c. Make smart choices about where to and where not to invest my energy
 - d. Respond extremely well to most adversities

4. Rate yourself on the following:
 - a. I step up to get things going
 - b. I generate momentum on the things that matter
 - c. People can count on me to put ideas in motion
 - d. I demonstrate real initiative

5. Rate yourself on the following:
 - a. I give up on my most important goals
 - b. I respond poorly to adversity
 - c. I make poor choices regarding my goals

- d. I tend to be close minded
6. In comparison to everyone else, I tend to:
- a. Put my full effort into what I do
 - b. Be an avid learner
 - c. Handle tough moments really well
 - d. Have good instincts into where or where not to invest my effort

APPENDIX C

Participant Interview Protocol and Questions

First, thank you for meeting with me today and for completing the first two exercises. I look forward to talking about your responses to those exercises during this interview. Are you comfortable with me recording this interview, so that I don't miss any of your responses? You have signed a consent form regarding this interview, but I want to remind you that your participation is voluntary and if at any time you want to withdrawal from participation, that is your choice. Shall we proceed?

General information questions:

As I mentioned, we will discuss your responses to the first two exercises, as we move through this interview, but first I would like to ask you some general questions about yourself.

1. How long have you worked for this company?
2. How many different roles have you had, within this company?
3. What do you enjoy most about your current role?
4. Do you feel your work at this organization has enabled you to be at your best every day?
5. How would you define thriving?
6. On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate your ability to thrive in your everyday work?

Individual Factors – questions related to individual factors: growth mindset and positive perspective at work (Dweck, 2006; Schreiner, 2010):

7. As we talk about your ability to thrive at work, can you describe some of the factors that enable you to do your best every day and feel positive about your work?
8. What specific impact does a factor such as (use an example from the participant) have on you? What impact does this factor have on others?
9. When something goes wrong for you with regards to your work, what do you do to help make things better/right?
10. Can you describe a situation where things were going wrong for you at work and what you did to help turn things around?

Relational Factors - questions related to relational factors: social connectedness and professional network (Schreiner, 2010):

In the first exercise (Concept Mapping), I had asked you to develop a concept map regarding the relational factors that you feel help you to thrive at work.

11. Can you describe your map to me?

12. Why did you choose those specific factors?
13. What does this (factor discussed by participant) mean to your ability to thrive at work?
14. Can you describe why you chose the factor in this larger circle to be more important to you than the factor in this smaller circle?
15. Can you explain the connections that you made with your labeled lines and arrows?
16. Why are these social and professional connections important to you and your ability to thrive?

Organizational Factors – questions related to organizational factors: engaged learning through professional development opportunities, coaching, feedback, defined purpose and well-being (Spreitzer & Sutcliffe, 2007; Schreiner, 2010; Spreitzer & Porath, 2012):

In the second exercise, I asked you to use the five factors I provided to you and five of your own factors to describe how organizational factors support your ability to thrive at work.

17. Talk to me about your rankings. What did you chose (factor ranked first by participant) as the most important to you?
18. What do factors 2-5 (from participant list) mean to you and your ability to thrive?
19. Are there any other factors that you would add that you did not include in your own list?

Concluding question:

20. As you think about our discussion today, are there any other factors we have not already discussed, that would enhance your ability to thrive?

APPENDIX D

Social Artifact Exercise 1: Concept Map

Instructions: The purpose of this exercise is to elicit data about the relational factors you attribute towards thriving at work. Start your map with a circle in the middle to constitute thriving at work. Draw other circles around the center circle that begin to represent the types of relational factors that enable someone to thrive at work (i.e. co-worker support, caring boss, family support, etc.). Draw larger circles to represent the types of relational factors that have the most influence on one's ability to thrive at work, with smaller circles representing relational factors with less influence. You can use labeled lines or arrows to make connections.



APPENDIX E

Social Artifact Exercise 2: Ranking Exercise

Instructions: The purpose of this exercise is to elicit data about the organizational factors you attribute towards thriving at work. Start with the five cards I have provided you that list some of the organizational factors that can enable thriving at work. Develop your own set of five factors. Using the 10 cards, rank the cards from most important to least important in regards to your own ability to thrive at work.

- Receiving Feedback
- Purpose
- Personal Learning
- Well-being Support
- Feeling Valued

APPENDIX F

Research Blueprint

Research Questions	Data Collection Sources		
	Semi Structured Interview Questions	Social Artifact Exercise #1 Concept Map	Social Artifact Exercise #2 Ranking Exercise
RQ1. How do participants describe the individual factors that relate to their ability to thrive at work?	4., 5., 6.,7.,8.,9.,10.		
RQ2. What relational factors do participants describe as important for the ability to thrive at work?	11. 12. 13.,14., 15. 16., 17.	Covers this research question	
RQ3. How do participants describe the organizational factors that relate to their ability to thrive at work?	17. 18., 19.		Covers this research question

APPENDIX G

RANKING EXERCISE RESULTS

	Zulu	Tina	Chris	Susie	Sarah	Willy	Bob	Nora	Lefty	Mary	Warren	Kiki
1.	Work I enjoy	Family support	Strong leadership	Flexibility	Trust	Work/life balance	Responsibility	Purpose	Well-being support	Having fun	Quality	Feeling valued
2.	Receiving feedback	Flexibility	Purpose	Feeling valued	Equality	Personal learning	Purpose	Work/life balance	Purpose	Clear direction	Purpose	Passion
3.	Feeling valued	Boss relationship	Clear goals	Well-being support	Responsibility	Purpose	Engaged Team	Personal learning	Opinion matters	Flexibility	Tools	Flexibility
4.	Well-being support	Feeling valued	Risk-taking	Decision-making authority	Purpose	Feeling valued	Realistic goals	Well-being support	Money	Receiving feedback	Freedom	Growth
5.	Purpose	Engaged co-workers	Trust	Risk-taking	Personal Learning	Well-being support	Feeling valued	Succeeding	Personal learning	Respect	Brands	Personal learning
6.	Humor	Money	Innovation	Stretched	Well-being support	Money	Personal learning	Quality work	Teamwork	Purpose	Feeling valued	Purpose
7.	Personal learning	Purpose	Feeling valued	Personal learning	Receiving feedback	Engaged team	Resources	Flexibility	Feeling valued	Feeling valued	Personal learning	Receiving feedback
8.	Challenged	Well-being support	Receiving feedback	Purpose	Feeling valued	Belief in management	Receiving feedback	Opinion matters	Career development opportunities	Personal learning	Receiving feedback	Engaged team
9.	Recognizing differences	Receiving feedback	Personal learning	Receiving feedback	Fit environment	Safety	Decision-making	Receiving feedback	Fredon	Well-being support	Insights	Well-being support
10.	Fairness	Personal Learning	Well-being support	Money	Flexibility	Receiving feedback	Well-being support	Feeling valued	Receiving feedback	Engaged team	Well-being support	Educational advancement

VITA

APRIL PACK

- Education: Ed.D. (Educational Leadership) East Tennessee State University, 2018
M.B.A., Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama 1996
B.S. Business Education, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee 1990
Public Schools, Anderson County Tennessee
- Professional Experience: Global Sales Capabilities Director, Mars, Incorporated: Johnson City, Tennessee, 2016 to present
Senior Manager, Sales Learning & Development, Mars, Chocolate, North America: Johnson City, Tennessee, 2008 – 2016
Senior Manager Sales Capabilities, Mars, Chocolate U.S.: Morgantown, WV, 1999-2008
Account Manager, Mars, Chocolate U.S.: Birmingham, Alabama 1990-1999
- Publications: None at this time.
- Certifications: Myers-Briggs Step 2 Certification
Gallop Strengths Finder Certification
FIRO-B and Thomas Kilman Certification
Critical Thinking Process Facilitator Certification
Myers Briggs Qualification Program