

A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH TO THEORIZING RESILIENCE

*Dawna I. Ballard, Dron M. Mandhana, Yixuan Liu and
Nicole Butterbaugh*

Resilience—or “the process of reintegrating from disruptions in life” (Richardson, 2002, p. 309)—has garnered significant attention in recent years, particularly within organizational communication scholarship. Indeed, interest in resilience as both an independent and dependent variable in communication is well founded because resilience supports organizational members in responding adaptively to everyday work challenges, including organizational-employee relationships, work performance, and job loss, among others (Beck, 2016; Buzzanell, 2018; Kim, 2021; Lucas & Buzzanell, 2012). In particular, the importance of resilience is apparent in a wide range of occupations (e.g., nurses, emergency physicians, military personnel, astronauts, or disaster-relief workers) characterized by high stress and extreme conditions (Agarwal & Buzzanell, 2015; Fisher et al., 2019; Rush et al., 2024; Sahay & Wei, 2023).

While these studies highlight the promise of resilience for organizational members who face high rates of trauma and secondary traumatic stress (STS), the dominant conceptualization and treatment of resilience in extant literature limits its applicability in these same settings. This is because predominant conceptualizations of resilience are linear and sequential, focusing on how organizational members “bounce back” from short-term, episodic triggers and return to a post-disruption state. This conception is heuristic and operationalized well for certain types of work. Nonetheless, it lacks fit with organizational environments in which members cycle back and forth between success and failure daily, on the edge of chaos, to satisfy organizational requirements within incredibly complex, time-sensitive settings. These members do not bounce back from work stressors over time because there is simply no time to do so: the stressors never stop.

Therefore, in order to include a wider range of organizational settings, in this chapter, we consider a trauma-informed approach to theorizing resilience. This approach derives from the mutually constitutive nature between time and resilience. That is, while more scholars are beginning to appreciate and highlight the temporal nature of resilience as a process (see Ballard & Aguilar, 2020; Betts et al., 2022; Buzzanell, 2010; Chewning et al., 2024; Doerfel et al., 2010, 2022; Fisher et al., 2019; Long et al., 2024) and others have explored the important role of time-based stressors in driving resilience (Pérez-Nordtvedt & Harrison, 2024), our approach includes both of these perspectives and extends this work to consider the ways in which resilience is ultimately time-based—not simply temporal. Below we illustrate why a trauma-informed approach to resilience must take a time-based perspective and we identify key elements of this perspective. Next, we elaborate on how a time-based perspective necessarily cuts across other levels and domains of resilience. We then point to the limitations

of extant resilience research focused on individual solutions to structural problems. We conclude by describing structural solutions that require policy investments to support organizational members' resilience.

The Foundations of a Time-Based Perspective on Resilience

Resilience has been studied from diverse perspectives, each contributing unique insights on how individuals and organizations adapt to adversity. A trait-based perspective highlights inherent characteristics like adaptability, self-efficacy, and social support, emphasizing personal attributes that enable coping with hardship (DeSimone et al., 2017; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Raetze et al., 2022). However, this view often neglects the connection between these traits and specific triggers, overlooking the variability of adversities and the dynamic strategies individuals employ (Fisher et al., 2019; Scharp et al., 2021). Alternatively, resilience is sometimes viewed as a short-term accomplishment, emphasizing the ability to “bounce back” quickly following disruptions, though critics argue this perspective downplays sustained engagement with ongoing adversities in contexts of cumulative trauma (Agarwal & Buzzanell, 2015; King et al., 2023; see Chapter 20, Williams et al., 2026). For example, in healthcare settings, nurses often face recurring emotional trauma due to patient loss. Unlike singular disruptions, these cumulative adversities require resilience that is sustained over time, not simply a one-time response.

Another approach frames resilience as a causal chain, identifying antecedents and sequential processes (Hillmann et al., 2018), yet risks oversimplifying dynamic interactions and neglecting the complexity of overlapping adversities (Buzzanell, 2018; Hill et al., 2018). Others examine resilience at single levels—micro, meso, or macro—focusing on specific contexts like interpersonal exchanges or organizational practices, though such compartmentalization may obscure multilevel interactions and broader systemic dynamics (Buzzanell & Houston, 2018; Golden & Jorgenson, 2023). Finally, research often celebrates resilience-promoting factors such as social connections and personality traits as universally positive but overlooks potential negative effects, including relational strain or stress multipliers, necessitating a more nuanced understanding of these dynamics (Afifi & Harrison, 2017).

A time-based approach to resilience addresses many of the limitations associated with each of these approaches. To elaborate, time and temporality are distinct, yet related, constructs that offer unique insights into the process of resilience. Temporality refers to the *inherent patterns that define a process*, event, or activity. All human processes are temporal, including resilience, and this has been increasingly addressed in extant literature. Beyond temporality, however, time refers to the various symbolic, external markers that *point toward* a given process, event, or activity. A workweek or a fiscal year is a prototypical example of time. In fact, both of these units of time are frequently used to help us make sense of, reflect on, and even practice resilience. For instance, organizational members may talk about whether they had a rough week or a hard year at work. Similarly, they may look toward each of these points in time as potential sites of recovery from work that support resilience processes, such as through a restorative weekend or annual vacation days during which they seek relaxation. Time is so tightly tied to our sense of relief, recovery, and resilience that an entire chain of restaurants, TGI Fridays, is named for this conception (“Thank God, it’s Friday!”).

At its core, across various definitions in the literature, resilience is a measure of endurance, of going on and continuing to show up, in the face of trauma and difficulty (Agarwal & Buzzanell, 2015). While Ballard and Aguilar (2020) argue that speed should not be a qualifying condition of resilience—in contrast to many (especially early) definitions that are principally preoccupied with how quickly people or entities recover—all conceptions of resilience share in common an interest with whether and how people *keep going* during or after facing adversity. Thus, time (not simply temporality) is the definitive feature of resilience. This clarity and focus on time is critical to

better understanding a range of work in which organizational members face daily, chronic trauma in carrying out their jobs. In occupations where both high burnout and turnover are the norm, resilience is unexpected. Therefore, it begs the question that drives our work: *How do people do hard work well?*

Building upon the recognition of time-based and temporal dynamics in resilience processes, the concept of social entrainment offers a compelling theoretical lens for examining resilience. It allows us to understand the central role of pacing in resilience processes, especially in traumatic communication contexts. Drawn from biology and first adapted by McGrath and Rotchford (1983) to consider time-based issues at work, social entrainment reflects a systems perspective on organizational communication. It centers on the synchronization of internal (termed endogenous) rhythms with external (termed exogenous) pacers, a process observed across various forms of human behavior.

In this context, endogenous pacers refer to the routine, cyclical activities that individuals carry out when completing task demands at their own pace. In contrast, exogenous pacers refer to external time-based requirements that may alter the pace of that work. For example, let us consider two professions not commonly associated with a high level of job-related trauma: accountants and professors. Accountants complete quarterly reports and professors assign grades at the end of each semester. In the former example, the fiscal quarter is the exogenous pacer and the accountants' activities toward aligning with this pacer may influence their endogenous rhythm—they might stay later at work or work through lunch to ensure stakeholders receive this report promptly. In the latter example, the semester is the exogenous pacer that professors adjust their personal and professional activities to accommodate, often deciding that certain activities must wait until after the semester ends in order to devote time to grade submission.

Building upon the recognition of time-based dynamics in resilience processes, this synchrony between endogenous (internal) and exogenous (external) pacers emerges as a critical component in understanding resilience. Entrainment does not necessarily improve resilience. Indeed, Pérez-Nordtvedt and Harrison (2024) argue that entrainment actually constrains temporal resilience. Nonetheless, we point to research that suggests social entrainment can be a protective factor in resilience given the appropriate setting and context.

Our use of the social entrainment perspective in this project closely aligns with Richardson's (2002) conceptualization of resilience as a process of *reintegrating internally from external disruptions*. Put differently, the process of resilience is how individuals' personal rhythms return to a state of equilibrium after a perturbation in their work environment. Similarly, Pérez-Nordtvedt and Harrison (2024) describe temporal equilibrium as a state of alignment between internal pacing and external demands. They integrate principles of social entrainment with the resilience literature to define temporal resilience as a sustained practice of aligning internal rhythms with external demands. While they are narrowly focused on time-demands, and we are focused more broadly on work events and demands in general, their use of a temporally informed social entrainment perspective and systems-level approach is instructive. From a social entrainment perspective, resilience is not solely about reacting to disruptions but about fostering a balance between internal capacities and external expectations, supporting both individual and organizational adaptabilities in the face of persistent challenges.

The iterative, time-based nature of resilience is punctuated by Richardson (2002) through the concept of reintegration and by Pérez-Nordtvedt and Harrison (2024) through the concept of alignment. While the concepts are similar in many respects, the concept of alignment has purchase across various social scientific, humanistic, and biological literatures and speaks to the underlying process of entrainment that is tied to resilience. At a biological level—and because this perspective originates in biology it is especially telling—when the 2017 Nobel Laureates who were awarded the prize in Physiology or Medicine spoke about the practical, everyday implications concerning their discovery

of the biological clock (entrainment at its finest) they pointed to the importance of alignment. In their press release, the recipients Jeffrey C. Hall, Michael Rosbash and Michael W. Young cautioned that “Chronic misalignment between our lifestyle and the rhythm dictated by our inner timekeeper is associated with increased risk for various diseases” (Nobel Assembly, 2017, para. 3). Although their findings pertain to biological health, the principle of aligning endogenous pacers, such as natural circadian rhythms, with exogenous pacers, such as work schedules, underscores a broader need for harmony across physical, psychological, and organizational domains (Branzei & Fathallah, 2023).

Conceptions of alignment are also found in research across a range of communication and work settings. In communication, Pickering and Garrod (2006) propose that alignment forms the basis of successful dialogue, where interlocutors develop similar representations of meaning through synchronized language use and mental models. Similarly, in collaborative work contexts, Jackson and colleagues (2011) introduce the notion of collaborative rhythms, emphasizing the critical, yet often overlooked, role of temporal alignment in achieving collective objectives. This work underscores how rhythmic alignment across organizational, biographical, and infrastructural dimensions facilitates effective collaboration. Steinhardt and Jackson (2014) also argue that plans and planning are integral to bridging and harmonizing discordant rhythms in scientific collaborations, showing how alignment supports both individual and group effectiveness.

In summary, a time-based perspective on resilience highlights how a range of personal and professional rhythms enable and constrain organizational members’ resilience. Drawing on social entrainment theory, it focuses our attention on the alignment among varied endogenous and exogenous pacers that drive members’ day-to-day lives and create either virtuous or vicious cycles. In particular, we argue that resilience is partially a function of how well or how poorly external rhythms support sustainable internal rhythms.

In the next section, we continue to develop this time-based perspective on resilience by drawing on the meso level model of organizational temporality. A trauma-informed approach to resilience must consider the meso level structures that shape and are shaped by formal and informal work norms. These meso level structures necessarily cut across other levels of resilience at micro and macro levels. Therefore, in the next section, we both (1) elaborate on why this perspective is especially needed to understand and intervene in resilience processes where work is routinely traumatic, and (2) identify how this time-based perspective also informs non-traumatic work settings.

How a Time-Based Perspective Cuts across Levels and Domains of Resilience

A time-based perspective on resilience brings into focus a systems-level understanding of resilience, emphasizing the interplay of multilevel processes, subsystems, and varying timescales (Pérez-Nordtvedt & Harrison, 2024). It necessarily encompasses micro, meso, and macro levels (Ballard & Seibold, 2003). For instance, at the macro level, time is driven by the broader organizational environment, industry and occupational norms, as well as the organizational culture. Additionally, moderating factors at the micro level (discussed in the next section) may include social identity, familial responsibilities, gender, age, and personality. Ultimately, however, a time-based perspective considers how resilience processes are mediated through meso level communication structures that drive social entrainment—including feedback cycles, activity coordination methods, and workplace technologies. Specifically, the time scale of feedback (when members learn about the outcomes of their work activities), the ways in which organizational members carry out their work (either individually or collectively), and even the types of technologies upon which their work relies are all exogenous pacers that drive work rhythms.

While Pérez-Nordtvedt and Harrison (2024) point out that these structures can potentially outpace organizational members and lead to reduced temporal resilience, other research shows that the

existence of routine, cyclical paces in the environment promotes resilience (Ballard, forthcoming; Steup et al., 2022). For instance, exogenous rhythms can be too fast and hurt members' efforts to enact resilience. However, the existence of a rhythm itself can serve as a protective factor that supports members' resilience. In this section, we look at evidence to this effect across levels and domains of resilience, including traumatic and non-traumatic work settings.

Individuals often talk about the time needed to "gain their footing" at the start of work—ranging from the beginning of a new week (Hülshager et al., 2022) to a new career (Bristow et al., 2019)—when they look to find a rhythm that suits them (Sun et al., 2024). However, for individuals in highly traumatic, crisis-driven work there may not be a rhythm or regular cycle to the work. In some cases, its timing cannot be anticipated as in the case of a fiscal quarter or end of a semester. Such an example of work that lacks predetermined rhythms is the multidisciplinary team (MDT), the focus of engaged scholarship led by the first author. MDTs are foundational to the mission of children's advocacy centers (CACs), a survivor-centered, collaborative response model developed in the 1980s to improve the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases while providing therapeutic recovery services and case management. While the work of CACs remains largely hidden, given its setting, in 2019, nearly 1,000 local CACs served more than 371,000 children across the United States alone.

MDTs are extreme action teams, or

teams (a) that complete their tasks in performance environments with one or more contextual features that are atypical in level (e.g., extreme time pressure) or kind (e.g., confinement, danger) and (b) for which ineffective performance has serious consequences (e.g., compromised health or well-being of the team or the team's clients).

(Bell et al., 2018; p. 2741)

Organizational members that face high levels of trauma in their day-to-day work are often part of extreme teams, such as life-saving critical teams (see Chapter 20, Williams et al., 2026). Such teams lack the advantage of task routineness that characterizes other work.

In the case of MDTs, observing their use of time-based communication structures highlights how social entrainment can support resilience processes. The central communication structure upon which MDTs rely is the multidisciplinary case review, a regular meeting (that is recurrent and cyclical, ranging from weekly to monthly in frequency) where members come together for case management. The case review is a key intervention of CACs in contrast to the way child abuse cases were worked prior to the creation of the CAC model. Their use of the case review comports with theorizing on temporal resilience by Pérez-Nordtvedt and Harrison (2024) who propose that: "individuals achieve temporal equilibrium by automatically or deliberately entraining to temporal structures" (p. 4). Ballard (forthcoming) reports that, in focus groups and interviews, MDT members described how this structure met multiple member needs, including improved resilience and longevity within their careers. Survey data also triangulated these findings.

Members who had worked in the same positions prior to joining an MDT reflected on the change it meant for their work lives and for their emotional well-being. They talked about the STS, or the "natural and consequential behavior(s) and emotion(s) resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other [or client] and the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person [or client]" (Figley, 1995, p. 7), associated with their work. Consequently, this regular opportunity to learn more about the case while also being in the company of others who understood their work served as a protective factor against burnout driven by STS. The value of cultivating relationships in MDTs also supports classic research by Ray and Miller (1994) highlighting how relationships can mitigate stress and burnout or, conversely, exacerbate these challenges.

Other research shows how social entrainment fosters prosocial behaviors and interpersonal affiliation—both protective factors in resilience processes. Knight and colleagues (2017) describe how “entrainment gives rise to collective emotionality, shared experience and group cohesiveness” (p. 100) enhancing individuals’ capacity to cope with adversity. For instance, organizational members develop shared rituals, like debrief meetings at the end of each week or even happy hours after work, that foster cohesion and reduce burnout by creating predictable shared temporal markers. In workplace settings where organizational members face ongoing trauma, a shared rhythm may be needed to cultivate a supportive environment. This synchronization not only bolsters resilience but also strengthens collective resolve, encouraging continued engagement in challenging and potentially traumatizing work due to the shared sense of purpose and solidarity.

Across domains of resilience, the value of creating or appropriating formal communication structures to serve as exogenous pacers is described in non-traumatic contexts as well. For example, Steup and colleagues (2022) describe three ways that farmer-knowledge workers create sustainable work lives based on their relationship to endogenous and exogenous pacers, which they respectively termed natural versus structural rhythms: “...Anchoring (tying oneself to a particular rhythm to create accountability and structure), decoupling (loosening or cutting ties with a rhythm to create flexibility), and gap-filling (interweaving complementary rhythms to create balance). Together, these practices constitute attunement work” (p. 1). The lack of defined, formal organizational structures these agricultural professionals face is similar to organizational members in roles marked by extreme and traumatic conditions, such as MDTs. Therefore, anchoring offers them structure as needed. However, they simultaneously manage the problems with entrainment by decoupling from other rhythms (addressing the challenges that Pérez-Nordtvedt and Harrison [2024] raise). Alternating between these two strategies creates a sustainable rhythm that Steup and colleagues called gap-filling. Consistent with a time-based lens on resilience, Steup and colleagues (2022) illustrate how individuals strategically finding and attuning to various rhythms in their work (what they term attunement work) creates the conditions that allow them to have a “reasonable life” (p. 1).

We note that while Richardson (2002) describes the need for reintegration in resilience, and Pérez-Nordtvedt and Harrison (2024) describe the need for alignment for temporal resilience, Steup and colleagues (2022) use the term attunement. They explain (p. 2 and p. 14):

Whereas alignment work addresses the need to bring disparate rhythms into workable alignment in collaborative projects, attunement work speaks to the ways individuals relate to rhythms in their work-lives. As a theoretical lens attunement work shifts from a task-oriented, organizational, and conflict-averse perspective of rhythms to one that is more personal, affective, and messy. The goals of attunement work are not necessarily to accomplish work but to sustain work....We define attunement work as the ways people negotiate their relationships with various temporal rhythms, with the goal of creating sustainable work-lives.

What all of these processes—reintegration, alignment, and attunement—have in common is a focus on the relationship between endogenous and exogenous demands. Nonetheless, there are some important differences in the way each project uses the terms. Reintegration presumes an endpoint. This conception of resilience presumes that individuals will return once again to a state of equilibrium, having reintegrated internally from an external disruption. In Pérez-Nordtvedt and Harrison’s (2024) work on temporal resilience, alignment processes also begin in response to an external disruption and presume the return to a state of equilibrium. Thus, alignment refers to a state while attunement refers to a process.

Compared with both the use of terms like (re)integration and alignment, Steup and colleagues (2022) use attunement to presume an ongoing resilience process where internal and external demands

are in constant consideration and (re)negotiation. They presume that various rhythms have been successfully negotiated and navigated in a way that the ensuing pace is sustainable as opposed to simply synchronized. Used in this way, attunement is heuristic and a useful complement for the social entrainment literature. While Steup and colleagues (2022) are not theorizing social entrainment processes, their use of attunement (denoting a reference to two different musical notes) draws attention to an underlying normative value about alignment (denoting a reference to two different biological rhythms) found in other social science and biological literature: as the Nobel Laureates awarded for discovery of the biological clock conveyed in their press release, alignment reflects a *proper and sustainable fit* between endogenous and exogenous variables. Anything else is considered misalignment. By alignment, we refer variously to a state of synchrony and to the process of synchronizing two rhythms that supports the health of the system over time.

Our approach to alignment complements Hill and colleagues (2018) focus on a dynamical systems approach to resilience that is iterative in nature, involving continuous interactions across levels of analysis and over time. In particular, Hill and colleagues (2018) highlight the complexity of resilience as an emergent property of interactions between psychological, physiological, and environmental factors. They describe how risk factors and resilience-promoting factors interact to shape resilience outcomes, suggesting that protective factors like social support, motivation, and confidence operate within the context of situational demands. This view reinforces the necessity of attending to the interplay of external stressors and the personal resources available to individuals. Similarly, Ishak and Williams (2018) introduce the concept of adaptive resilience, reflecting an approach to resilience where the need for reintegrating from disruptions becomes obsolete. Instead, adaptive resilience is viewed as an ongoing process of seamlessly integrating disruptions, creating a continuous state of normalcy in which trigger events and adaptation are integral components of the process.

Hill and colleagues (2018) conceptualize resilience not as a fixed outcome but as an evolving, proactive process that unfolds across longer timescales in response to perturbations in the environment. As is the case with traumatic work, these perturbations can occur many times in a day. In these work settings, individuals are constantly navigating this rhythmic dance so the resilience laboring—reintegration, alignment, or attunement work—may appear invisible. This is due to the time scale at which it is cast: it is an ongoing day-to-day process, wherein individuals seek to maintain equilibrium and adapt to fluctuating organizational and environmental contexts. Alternatively, in other (non-traumatic) work, these perturbations occur less often. Because these perturbations are the exception, rather than the rule, we can more clearly see the disruption it causes both in terms of time (when it causes a work stoppage—such as due to short-term employee leave or turnover) or impact (when it drives burnout—that leads to poor quality work) (Aguilar & Ballard, 2022). In these cases, resilience laboring is a measurable, visible reaction to external demands.

Ultimately, while Steup and colleagues (2022) point to the value of structure in managing the stress of work that lacks important boundaries and rhythms, they also acknowledge the rarity of their research setting. They studied a unique set of participants who had a great deal of autonomy over their work. This put them in the privileged position of being able to decouple from some rhythms and anchor to others in order to create sustainable work. Because this is not common for many professionals, and is the antithesis of trauma-based work, their success actually points to the perils inherent in much of the research on resilience: it is framed as the responsibility of individuals and not the organizations who are often the cause of the strain. We address this issue in the next section.

The Problem with Individual Solutions to Organizational Problems

Long and colleagues (2024) caution against overly simplistic or celebratory portrayals of resilience. Their critique identifies the “dark side” of resilience labor, exposing how unrealistic resilience scripts,

material precarity, and temporal expectations perpetuate stress and marginalization. They argue that resilience is too often framed as an individual responsibility, emphasizing rapid recovery and unwavering positivity while ignoring the relational and structural dynamics of resilience processes. They offer three interrelated lenses needed to more fully understand resilience:

(a) a material lens to highlight the privileges and resources requisite of resilience laboring, (b) a tensional lens to expose the constant negotiations of unrealistic and paradoxical resilience scripts anchored to identities, and (c) a temporal lens to call out the hegemonic temporal norms prescribed to the ‘successful’ performance of resilience. These lenses offer analytical entry points to challenge neoliberal conceptualizations of resilience, which often frame resilience as an unwavering individual responsibility to engage in tireless selfwork and rapidly and heroically bounce back from setbacks and failures.

(p. 180)

Through semi-structured interviews, they explored how both time-based and temporal concerns make individual resilience laboring unsustainable for most. For example, the stressors associated with attempting to always be prepared for setbacks and mounting a swift return to full functioning surfaced in their research. As per our initial argument that time—i.e., continuing to show up and endure adversity—is the definitive feature of resilience, Long and colleagues’ (2024) participants experienced resilience fatigue and spoke of the desire to not *have* to be resilient and keep laboring under the day-to-day strain of their work.

Long and colleagues’ (2024) findings point to the issue of attention to time scale in studying resilience that Hill and colleagues (2018) raise. Similarly, Fisher and colleagues (2019) highlight that the accumulation of daily stressors, while seemingly minor, can culminate in significant adversity when viewed over time. Without sensitivity to the role of time, research risks conflating transient responses to isolated events with the prolonged and iterative processes that define resilience as an ongoing process. By acknowledging time, scholars can distinguish between acute disruptions and chronic adversity, capturing the full trajectory of resilience responses as individuals adapt to shifting challenges. Scharp and colleagues’ (2021) work suggests that communicative resilience processes vary along a time-based continuum that ranges from enduring processes (that individuals enact for the long term) to contingent processes (based on circumstances and enacted at the moment). Such a perspective enables a richer exploration of how resilience strategies evolve, emphasizing that what works in the immediate aftermath of adversity may differ from what works over weeks, months, or years.

From a methodological vantage point, Fisher and colleagues (2019) critique the predominant use of cross-sectional and minimally longitudinal studies, which fail to capture the dynamic and time-based nature of resilience. For instance, consider a disaster-relief worker whose resilience laboring may look different in the immediate aftermath of a disaster versus six months later. Without a temporal lens, such differences are difficult to appreciate or measure, leading to an incomplete understanding of how resilience unfolds across different phases of adversity.

Relatedly, Fisher and colleagues (2019) argue that the resilience literature often overlooks its temporal dimension, disproportionately conceptualizing resilience as a static trait rather than a fluid, adaptive process. Cross-sectional studies provide only a snapshot of resilience at a single point in time, obscuring how individuals pivot between different resilience mechanisms in response to shifting stressors and organizational conditions. Without repeated measures that track resilience over time, existing research risks reinforcing a linear “bounce-back” narrative that does not align with the iterative and context-dependent nature of resilience.

Accordingly, there is a need for longitudinal methodological approaches that capture resilience rhythms—that is, how resilience mechanisms emerge, dissipate, and recalibrate over time (Fisher

et al., 2019). Diary studies and multi-wave longitudinal research provide evidence that resilience is neither a singular event nor a one-time outcome but rather a pattern of adaptation shaped by evolving workplace conditions. By shifting toward temporally aware research designs, scholars can better examine the oscillatory nature of resilience laboring and the ways in which personal and organizational rhythms must be entrained to sustain resilience.

For these reasons, individual resilience laboring is only sustainable in short-term, unexpected contexts (as is typically imagined in the literature) or in long-term contexts where individuals have a great deal of control over their work processes (as in settings like the farmer-knowledge workers that Steup and colleagues [2022] describe). However, individual resilience laboring is not sustainable in long-term settings with the expectation of continual work-based trauma *or* where organizational members have no control over their work processes.

Chewning and colleagues (2024) point to additional problems with an overreliance on individual resilience processes in any circumstance or setting. Their primary critique centers on the lack of consideration of the organizational and institutional causes of strain. Instead, the dominant discourse ignores the structural inequities that create the need for resilience processes and focuses instead on strategies for individuals left to address its impact on their own lives. For instance, individual members of healthcare organizations or the teams to which they belong are often left to act as human buffers to the institutional problems of healthcare. “Good physicians” end up being those that buffer their patients from the inequities and inefficiencies of the hospital or clinic where they work and sometimes even from the cruelty of insurance companies (Montori, 2020).

Acting as a buffer might allow patients to receive needed care but the physicians take home the consequences of that buffering (Aguilar & Ballard, 2022; Stephens, 2020). They bear the personal cost of their professional work. The same is true of the under resourced MDT members described earlier who protect children from the harms of child abuse (Ballard, forthcoming). Consequently, caseloads that are unmanageable and clinic schedules that are unrealistic create professional strain while personal demands, such as the varied schedules and time-based activities for school-aged children that are included in many organizational members’ daily and weekly rhythms, impact resilience processes. The role of these multiple exogenous pacers in shaping organizational members’ resilience laboring, across levels of analysis and across time, comes into greater focus through a time-based lens. Ray and Miller’s (1994) early focus on spillover—where personal and professional spheres intersect—similarly points to the role of these pacers across multiple domains in the resilience process.

Golden and Jorgenson’s (2023) work also addresses spillover by connecting resilience to the management of work-life precarity. They conceptualize resilience as an ongoing process in response to distress arising from precarities in economic stability, regard, health, and time. They argue that these domains are intertwined, with instability in one cascading into others, necessitating proactive resilience practices. For example, in their study, participants utilized digital calendar systems to coordinate family and work schedules, a strategy exemplified by a participant who relied on a color-coded Google Calendar to manage commitments across overlapping spheres of life. Therefore, while external resources can support resilience labor through synchronization of personal and professional rhythms, participants are often left to labor without the benefit of organizational support and ownership of the problem.

In summary, the treatment of resilience as individuals’ personal responsibility fails to adequately capture the larger organizational communication structures identified by Ballard and Seibold (2003) that shape and are shaped by time. Rather than cast at the individual level, a trauma-informed approach to theorizing resilience centers on time and considers how entrainment processes tied to communication structures at the meso level—including feedback loops and activity coordination methods—are implicated in resilience. Additionally, following from their meso level model of organizational

temporality, we see how the larger organizational environment, industry and occupational norms, as well as organizational culture shape resilience. Despite the fact that organizational members have personal agency, this is a less useful site to interrogate the relationship between work and resilience (Harper & Speed, 2014; see Chapter 16, Woo & Endacott, 2026). Instead, formal communication structures mediate varied system characteristics and either help or hurt members' resilience. Indeed, Harper and Speed (2014) make a normative claim that we take up below in the conclusion: when the day-to-day nature of work itself is the triggering event, we must center our attention on the work rather than depict resilience as the personal responsibility of organizational members.

Leveraging a Trauma-Informed Approach to Resilience through Policy Investments

Extant literature points to the necessity of systemic change and collective resilience initiatives rather than expecting individuals to shoulder the burden alone, reinforcing Buzzanell's (2010) emphasis on communal resilience. Therefore, given that the scholarly and popular literature is replete with suggestions for individuals about how they can weather professional and personal adversities, we close this chapter by pointing to a variety of structural and organizational solutions that can support organizational members in trauma-facing work settings, as well as in ordinary labor.

We want to highlight the structural innovation accomplished by the CAC movement. In one of her early meetings with the executive leadership team, the function of the MDT model was described to the first author as traffic control for a six-lane highway. The various child abuse disciplines—law enforcement, district attorneys, medical, forensic interviewers, therapists, and family advocates—all occupy different lanes, speeding by at different times. They need a mechanism, i.e., the multidisciplinary case review, to monitor and direct their forward movement (including slowing it down at times) in order to avoid certain disaster.

The metaphor of the six lane highway points to the need for simultaneous attention to speed and coordination, as well as the deadly outcomes associated with failure to adequately address both of these needs. While they were referring primarily to the outcomes for the clients they served, this “traffic control” offered by the case review also served the MDT members themselves. Given the pace of their work and the lack of any attention toward aligning the case needs with the member needs, the multidisciplinary case review was the communication structure that offered them both social and informational support to carry out their jobs on both task and socioemotional dimensions. In a similar setting without the benefit of the MDT model and the CAC infrastructure, McFadden and colleagues (2018) found that child protection social workers suffered from higher rates of burnout in the absence of community.

Scholars have developed the concept of *high resilience organizing* that draws attention to the need for many organizations to constantly pivot around disruption (Chewning et al., 2024; see Chapter 14, Doerfel & Chewning, 2026). This perpetual pivot is in response to disruption but time-based communication structures can create a self-sustaining rhythm wherein key organizational work gets its own time. The “time-out” for teams exemplifies a practical application of the trauma-informed approach to resilience. In sport, the time-out can be employed if athletes need time to recover in response to a recurring stressor (Hill et al., 2018). Time-outs are employed in other high resilience organizational contexts as well. Ishak and Ballard (2012) depict the centrality of “time-outs” for critical action teams, like wildland fire crews (another extreme team), in order to support and improve their performance. In medical teams, time-outs include taking a moment to consider additional solutions, use prospective hindsight, and employ additional resources, ultimately reducing diagnostic errors (Ely et al., 2011). These moments leverage time to both draw on and fulfill task- and relationship-needs of the team. This is essential for high resilience organizations. These organizations, as CACs demonstrate,

must create routine communication structures that offer their members some temporal stability and predictability in a turbulent environment.

As these examples illustrate, resilience in high-stress and trauma-laden work environments is not simply a matter of individual grit or adaptability but rather an outcome of structured, time-based communication practices that synchronize professional and personal rhythms. When organizations embed time-sensitive support mechanisms—such as multidisciplinary case reviews or scheduled “time-outs” in extreme action teams—they create a foundation for sustainable resilience rather than placing the burden on individuals to recover in isolation. Without such structures, workers must navigate unsustainable cycles of depletion and renewal, leading to burnout and turnover. Thus, resilience is not just about enduring adversity; it is about ensuring that the temporal conditions of work make resilience possible. In various organizational settings, adopting a trauma-informed approach involves implementing flexible work hours and pre-planned breaks. During intense deadlines, team members can accumulate stress, leading to emotional exhaustion and potential burnout. To mitigate this, organizations should establish structures that proactively support employee well-being. Strategies like flexible work schedules and scheduled breaks planned in advance are effective in preventing burnout from a trauma-informed resilience perspective.

Conclusion

Ultimately, resilience as a sustainable rhythm underscores the necessity of aligning endogenous and exogenous pacers to support individual well-being and professional functioning. This alignment, rooted in entrainment theory, highlights how the synchronization of personal and organizational rhythms enables individuals to adapt effectively to ongoing challenges. By shifting away from linear, “bounce back” models and recognizing resilience as an iterative, time-based process, organizations can reframe resilience as a collective responsibility rather than an individual burden.

This perspective demands that scholars and practitioners rethink resilience interventions—moving beyond self-care strategies toward structural solutions that embed predictable time-based mechanisms into organizational life. Whether through routine case reviews, scheduled pauses, or institutional pacing strategies, resilience must be designed into the temporal framework of work itself. Only then can organizations create conditions where individuals can sustain engagement in the face of persistent stress and trauma without compromising their well-being.

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