Group Thesis Reflection

Working on and completing a group honor’s thesis was both a challenging and rewarding experience. I was able to learn many things about collaboration and how the real research world functions. While we faced various challenges, and had disagreements about how research should be done or what we would even be studying, it was a successful and positive experience overall.

The largest challenge that I feel is part of any group project, is time. Everyone has different schedules, commitments, and workloads for school. While the four of us had many of the same classes, we all worked at different places and had other things going on in our life that made finding a time to work on the thesis difficult. Many of our meetings with our thesis chair or committee, only involved two or three of us due to challenges with finding a time that would work for everyone during the day. I feel that this also is part of why it took us two years to establish our thesis and figure out exactly what we would be doing. I am thankful that we started the process so early so that we could properly think through everything and not be rushed into decisions.

Another challenge of working as a group is having multiple opinions. This was challenging when we were setting up our study and figuring out how exactly we wanted things done. While we agreed on many things, there were still some areas where we would be split. It was especially difficult when it would be two against two. Not having someone to break the tie led to many discussions in order to find a compromise. While having so many opinions hindered us, it was also extremely beneficial. When one person was stuck, there would be three other minds to pitch in and assist. This also helped us all to think about the study from multiple perspectives. This would not happen in a research study involving a single researcher. I feel that
our study was the best it could be because we had so many perspectives and thoughts put into it. We were truly able to come up with the best option because we were forced to think through it and discuss it extensively. While it sometimes is not enjoyable having to defend your point of view and listen to others, it does help you become more thoughtful and a more well-rounded researcher. I am now able to think of things from more than just my point of view.

Another challenge with completing a group thesis is communication. Our primary form of communication outside of group meetings, was a group message. This worked really well for simple communication and decisions that needed to be made. This was not the best for larger decisions that we did not have time to meet up to discuss, however. Many points and opinions would get lost in the messages and many times information would get missed. Thankfully, this did not happen often and we were able to work through the times when it did.

The last challenge was splitting up the work and completing everything by certain deadlines. We split up the work pretty evenly. It was beneficial to each have an individual part because we knew that we had our own literature review, data analysis, and part of the discussion to complete. With the method section, general discussion, and other elements, we were able to equally split up the work or collaborate and write the sections together. The times when the work load may not have been equal were with the editing process and writing some of these sections. Like in any group, there was a trend of a few people doing a bit more than the others. I do not feel like it was unfair or completely unequal, but there were definite times where some members did not do quite as much. This also came into play with completing everything by the deadlines we set for ourselves. Our literature review took much longer than anticipated because some group members put it off and did not put the work in right away. This caused some frustrations but it was figured out in the end.
Overall, I would not change my decision to do a group thesis. Doing this group thesis allowed me to complete research in my undergraduate experience, work as a team, and learn so much more about the research world than I could have if I was working alone. While we all had our disagreements, frustrations, and times where we almost gave up, the end result far outweighs everything. The four of us are still very good friends and I am honored to have worked on such a large project with all of them.