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FOSTERING RESILIENCE: INTEGRATING POSITIVE CHARACTER STRENGTHS WITH DANCE MAKING SKILLS TO HELP YOUNG CHILDREN COPE WITH ADVERSITY

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FOSTERING RESILIENCE: INTEGRATING POSITIVE
CHARACTER STRENGTHS WITH DANCE MAKING
SKILLS TO HELP YOUNG CHILDREN
COPE WITH ADVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to investigate how involvement in a choreography unit focused on positive character strengths could increase confidence in strengths that foster resilience. Research shows that building resilience is the key to helping children overcome adversity and trauma. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to answer the three research questions in this study.

Q1   Does involvement in dance making build students' character strengths?

Q2   Which character strengths are best developed through dance making?

Q3   Which inspirations for dance making relate most thoroughly to the selected character strengths?

The research instruments used were a pre and post survey as well as an exit interview. There were twelve fifth grade participants from a charter school in an urban area who participated in this research. Permission for this study was obtained from the school leader and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Northern Colorado. Consent and ascent forms were signed by the parents of student participants and the participants themselves.

The research unit was implemented over the course of several months. The students learned about six character strengths from The Positivity Project that are known to build resilience. Each character strength was discussed in-depth. Students were then presented with

different types of inspirations for their choreography based on these strengths. Inspirations included videos, visual art, and poetry. The students were asked to choreograph a dance based on each character strength which they later performed for the class.

There were some unique limitations to this study due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the majority of the lessons were taught virtually, and some of the participants had to be replaced based on which students were able to consistently attend school online. There was also a small sample size and potential researcher bias since the researcher was already familiar with the participants as their dance teacher and designed the research instruments.

Findings from this study suggested that choreography classes can lead to an increase in an individual's confidence in their character strengths. Further research should be done on this subject to limit biases and determine consistency of these findings across different curricula and populations. Integrating character education with choreography classes could be a key factor in building more resilient students who are able to heal from trauma and toxic stress.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Goal of Thesis

Is it possible for a child who has experienced adversity at a young age to lead a healthy and successful life? There has been a rise in the number of children who experience trauma at a young age. "Childhood adversity is experienced by a large proportion of children in the US, with over 58% of children reporting at least one adverse event and almost 60% of this sub population reporting multiple events" (Thomas 1). According to the research of Alexandra Cook and her colleagues, childhood trauma can have a negative impact on brain development and often leads to immediate and even life-long problems for these children (390).

Some common issues for children who have been exposed to trauma include the following: social isolation, sensorimotor developmental difficulties, emotional regulation issues, low self-esteem, and academic struggles (Cook et al. 392). In order to overcome traumatic experiences such as racism, violence, poverty, or abuse, children must be involved in activities that develop resilience or the ability to recover from difficulties encountered in life.

One way to build resilience is through practicing and experiencing positive character strengths. "In today's rapidly changing world, character strengths – and a focus on relationships – must be intentionally cultivated from an early age. It is critical to ensure that our mental, emotional, and moral capacities grow alongside our advances in technology" (Positivity Project). If children are involved in experiences based on positive traits such as

optimism, perseverance, and perspective, it is possible they can activate those strengths when resilience becomes necessary.

> Mental resources like determination, self-worth, and kindness are what make us resilient: able to cope with adversity and push through challenges in the pursuit of opportunities. While resilience helps us recover from loss and trauma, it offers much more than that. True resilience fosters well-being, an underlying sense of happiness, love, and peace. Remarkably, as you internalize experiences of well-being, that builds inner strengths which in turn make you more resilient. (Hanson and Hanson 2)

Some of the keys to building resilience are developing relationships and having a sense of purpose. In-depth experiences with important character strengths can also lead to having stronger relationships with others by recognizing character strengths in other people (Pennebaker 1). Components that can improve resilience and reduce toxic stress include feeling safe in an environment, participating in cooperative games to help build relationships, developing problem solving skills, contributing to activities that promote literacy and learning critical thinking skills, as well as being involved in art, music, and/or movement (Powell and Davis 321).

One of the reasons the arts can develop resiliency is because they help individuals express their emotions unlike any other outlet. Participating in dance, drama, music, and/or visual art experiences has been known to reduce stress and anxiety. Furthermore, these experiences can improve intrapersonal understanding and interpersonal relationships (Georgetown Behavioral). In particular, children can develop many important life skills through the arts and from participating in dance classes. Dance classes can provide opportunities for creativity, collaboration, problem solving, and self-awareness. "Research studies connecting dance and learning indicate dance education has a positive effect on human traits and abilities such as creativity, critical thinking, self-esteem, reading, and social skills" (Minton and Hofmeister 68).

Participants in this study had opportunities to develop such abilities by focusing on character strengths that foster resilience. When students experience creative work in dance that is based on in-depth experiences with several character strengths, these experiences can draw attention to the fact that such strengths already exist within them (Hanson and Hanson 51). Creative dance classes offer many important benefits. Dancers have opportunities to solve simple and complex movement problems when improvising and choreographing. Anne Green Gilbert noted that students ". . . expand their creative skills through choreography and improvisation" (5). They can also strengthen neural pathways, express emotions, take risks, release stress, and bond with other dancers (Green Gilbert 6).

The goal of this thesis was to implement a choreography unit in which fifth grade students focused on their mental resources and positive psychology principles in the form of inspirations for creating dances. Thus, students in this study participated in a choreography unit designed to help them improve their knowledge of several character strengths which are part of The Positivity Project. The organization The Positivity Project was structured, ". . . to partner with schools across the country and equip educators with the training, strategy, and resources to teach their students positive psychology's 24 character strengths" (Positivity Project). Involvement in school-wide education on these character strengths has been known to improve students' ability to appreciate their own strengths and the strengths of others. This form of education has also been shown to develop improved self-confidence and stronger peer relationships for students (Positivity Project).

For the design of her choreography unit, the researcher chose six character strengths out of the twenty-four character strengths that are a focus of The Positivity Project. Those character strengths chosen included teamwork, perseverance, social intelligence, hope/optimism, self-

control, and perspective because they could more easily be part of inspirations for creating movement. For example, students were presented with various inspirations such as a poem, visual art, story, or song that the researcher felt related to each character strength.

The researcher also attended a training session entitled, Creating Trauma Sensitive School Communities. This training was presented through St. John Fisher College. The presenters defined resilience as, "The ability to thrive; developing strengths and overcoming harsh conditions while learning to solve problems in spite of trauma and adversity" (Riter and Hildenbrand). Therefore, in order to help students gain resilient tendencies, they must develop certain strengths. Some of the most important factors that foster resilience were described in the training and included building positive relationships, gaining problem solving skills, and developing self-efficacy, moral principles, passion, purpose, and self-regulation (Riter and Hildenbrand). These training sessions helped the researcher learn about and then choose the character strengths for developing resilience out of the twenty-four which she then incorporated in her study.

Creative experiences based on the six character strengths used in this study helped promote key factors which can build resilience. For instance, teamwork improves problem solving skills and relationships. Perseverance builds self-efficacy and purpose. Social Intelligence enhances relationships and develops enthusiasm toward reaching a goal. Hope/optimism increases passion and a sense of purpose. Self-control can be interchanged with self-regulation which was one of the keys in creating resilience. Finally, perspective allows for a sense of purpose, knowledge of one's skills, and moral principles. The character strengths are present in everyone, but each individual has more ability in some character strengths than in others.

After further thought, the researcher decided the six character strengths described above should be included in her study for the following reasons. Teamwork was chosen because of the positive emotions associated with being part of a larger whole since it can help students build relationships and learn to collaborate with others. When students work together in a group, it reminds them that they can contribute to the success of other people.

It was important to include perseverance in this study because, ". . . those who persevere through setbacks often reap the benefits of the success gained by refusing to give up" (Positivity Project). People with less perseverance are likely to give up and walk away from a problem when faced with the potential for failure (Peterson and Seligman 234). The tendency toward persistence during these moments can be defined ". . . as voluntary continuation of goal-directed action in spite of obstacles, difficulties, or discouragement" (Peterson and Seligman 229). Experience with this mental resource can help students remember that even when life gets tough, it is important to keep going and never give up.

Social intelligence is related to empathy. It helps students understand their own thoughts and feelings as well as those of other people (Positivity Project). People who are high in social intelligence ". . . exhibit special capacities in regard to experiencing and strategizing about emotion. They are adept at perceiving emotions in relationships, and they display a keen understanding of their emotional relationships with others" (Peterson and Seligman 337).

Hope/optimism is a key strength in building resilience. "Children who bounce back well from setbacks and resist depression believe that the causes of bad events are temporary" (Seligman 52). They also recognize that there are permanent reasons for the good events in their life (54). This strength also encourages students to have hope for the future, no matter what has happened in the past or is happening in the present (Positivity Project).

Self-control was chosen because this strength is associated with the ". . . ability to control your emotions and behaviors" (Positivity Project). This strength reminds students that long-term goals can be accomplished through self-discipline. Self-control also helps students complete necessary tasks even when they do not want to. "Self-regulation refers to how a person exerts control over his or her own responses so as to pursue goals and live up to standards. These responses include thoughts, emotions, impulses, performances, and other behaviors" (Peterson and Seligman 337).

Finally, perspective is another important strength and important to the goal of this study. "At the heart of resilience is a belief in oneself – yet also a belief in something larger than oneself" (Marano 1). This strength allows students to see the world from many points of view while also developing self-awareness (Positivity Project). It also ". . . allows the individual to address important and difficult questions about the conduct and meaning of life" (Peterson and Seligman 182). Therefore, perspective is what allows children to understand their own strengths and recognize and appreciate the strengths of others.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to understand whether involvement in an elementary school dance curriculum focused on the character strengths named and described above could be used to build resilience in fifth grade students. The aim was to answer several essential questions related to the field of dance education such as those that follow:

Q1   Does involvement in dance making build students' character strengths?

Q2   Which character strengths are best developed through dance making?

Q3   Which inspirations for dance making relate most thoroughly to the selected character strengths?

The researcher, who was also the dance teacher, presented newly created choreography lessons designed to address the development of the students' character strengths mentioned above. The inspirations for creating movements and dances were selected because the researcher felt they related closely to or communicated one or more of the six selected character strengths.

From a young age, it is important to focus on building children's resilience in any way possible. "With resilience, you can work through the effects of stress and negative emotions and not only bounce back, but actually thrive" (Ackerman 1). School is one setting in which resilience can be developed. "Educators truly are a first line of defense for children dealing with issues beyond their control and recognition" (Bell et al. 145). It is important that teachers are sensitive toward trauma and its symptoms, while supporting students on their path toward healing.

> One childhood trauma may cause several realms of the child's school life to be affected, including interpersonal communication skills, peer relationships, and academic achievement. Children may be more comfortable receiving help from familiar faces and environments; therefore, educators are at the forefront of identifying and contributing to the treatment of childhood trauma, thus facilitating healthy personal, social, and academic development. (Bell et al. 140)

The major purpose of this thesis was to use dance, especially choreography, as a tool to help students become more confident in terms of their character strengths that could, in turn, make them more resilient. Once key character strengths are recognized by students, they can become involved in choreographic experiences based on them (Hanson and Hanson 64). The hope was that the creative process in dance could be used to instill the character strengths that foster resilience into the central nervous system of the students.

In the book entitled *Choreography: A Basic Approach Using Improvisation*, Sandra Minton described the framework for the creative process that was adapted to create the dance unit in this study. This led to using the following steps to develop the dance unit. First, the

dancers observed an inspiration that provided an in depth look at each character strength. These stimuli were presented to the students in the form of works of art, videos, or poetry.

Second, "The choreographer feels a response to that inspiration that he or she would like to portray through dance" (Minton 3). Thus, the students were encouraged to focus on their response to the inspirations selected by the researcher.

The final step that was used in this particular choreography unit was labeled, ". . . memories + imagination = movement" (Minton 3). In this step, the choreographer uses his or her background knowledge about related experiences and memories plus his or her imagination to create movements. The students who participated in this study were encouraged to use their memories and imagined ideas triggered by the selected inspirations to create movements which could be woven together to make dances.

The three steps described above, were incorporated in the curriculum devised by the researcher so that the students began to improvise movements based on inspirations. Students then began problem solving to combine their movements together to create a final dance. This study also allowed the students to identify and focus on key mental resources in the form of the positive character strengths. Participants had an opportunity to, ". . . develop psychological resources by having sustained and repeated experiences that are turned into durable changes in the brain" (Hanson and Hanson 50). In other words, the purpose of this study was to have the students use creative movement to develop their inner strengths based on the selected character traits.

The motivation for this study was also based on the following premise. Everyone inherently has the twenty-four character strengths of positive psychology within to some degree. Many of these strengths are necessary for building resilience and bouncing back from adversity.

Students might know that they have these strengths in theory. However, when they have meaningful experiences with important strengths such as creating their own movements, they are more likely to notice and rely on those strengths at a later time. Then, they can access strengths that make them resilient whenever there is a need (Hanson and Hanson 64). The hope in this study was that the participants could connect with their inner resources and develop some of the character strengths that foster resilience in order to overcome adversity.

Significance of Study

The significance of this study was to support evidence that children who are affected by trauma can still be successful socially and academically. There are many negative effects on the brain and body when children experience adversity. "Trauma exposure encompasses uncomfortable emotional experiences paired with physiological and behavioral changes, which often occur over a prolonged period of time" (Phifer and Hull 202). Research shows that more than 50% of all children have reported Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Fourteen percent of children in the county where this same research took place have even reported experiencing four or more ACEs (Riter and Hildenbrand).

> Exposure to ACEs can cause short and long-term negative outcomes and may lead to detrimental changes in brain development and behavior that can significantly impede a child's ability to engage in various learning processes. These brain alterations can impact a person's physiologic stress response into perceiving a benign experience as a potentially life-threatening event which can lead to development of maladaptive behavioral and social coping skills that can have long-term health and mental health consequences. (Powell and Davis 319)

Students who have experienced trauma are often in survival mode because of the changes in their brains. These changes lead to cognitive, social, and emotional difficulties that can be long term. Some implications of trauma include lack of engagement in school, impulsivity,

withdrawal, defiance, aggression, anxiety, and lack of appropriate social skills (Riter and Hildenbrand).

Children who live below the poverty level are even more likely to experience the negative effects of trauma.

> Those who live in poverty experience a significantly higher number of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). These children are twice as likely as their affluent peers to have been exposed to three or more distressing life events, such as the death of a parent, a parent serving jail time, witnessing domestic violence, being a victim of or witness to neighborhood violence, living with someone who was mentally ill or suicidal, living with someone who had a drug or alcohol problem, and being treated or judged unfairly due to race/ethnicity. (Powell & Davis 319)

At the school involved in this research, around 94% of all students live below the poverty level. This study was very important in finding ways to help students overcome adversity and retrain their brains to decrease negative outcomes.

Students may or may not be learning techniques to build resilience at home. This is true especially if they do not feel safe at home because that is where trauma has occurred. Therefore, a child's school environment becomes the most important place for them to build skills that can help them cope with adversity. "It has been estimated that while there is a general lack of mental health and social emotional services for high-risk youth, nearly two-thirds who do receive services receive them through school" (Powell and Davis 321).

Schools can be highly effective in helping children build resilience. Trauma informed teachers can help students build supportive relationships while developing social, emotional, and behavioral skills to help cope with adversity (Terrasi and Crain De Galarce 38). Research has shown that children can learn to be resilient and teachers can help them achieve this goal. Teachers can allow students to become aware of their strengths so that they can build self-efficacy. With the help of a trauma sensitive school environment, children can learn to manage

their emotions, find a sense of purpose and meaning, and also build important problem-solving skills (Riter and Hildenbrand). "While trauma has a negative effect on learning, learning can also undo trauma" (Terrasi and Crain De Galarce 36).

Building character education into the school climate is an important way to foster resilience. At the researcher's school, every classroom provides resources to help the students build positive character strengths. "Positive school climate is associated with less bullying and harassment on campus, as well as improved school achievement, attendance, and better student mental health" (Kataoka et al. 418). An important point of intervention for educators is to teach alternative social/emotional responses (Chafouleas et al. 41). The researcher's school uses The Positivity Project in order to bring awareness to the individual strengths of all students (Positivity Project).

The researcher was able to create a unit that focused on providing in depth experiences with six important character strengths from The Positivity Project. A weekly dance class gave students the opportunity to become more familiar with six strengths that foster resilience. Then, the students were given the opportunity to choreograph dances that represented each of those strengths. Not only did this unit allow the participants to potentially improve their problem-solving skills but also to become more aware of existence of those six strengths in themselves and in others.

Another significant aspect of this study was that it could support the theory that dance can help students overcome adversity and heal from the effects of trauma. ". . . research also shows that children are resilient, and their brains are flexible. Given the right environmental conditions and appropriate interventions, the severity of trauma symptoms can be reduced" (Terrasi and Crain De Galarce 37). If children are able to have experiences with positive coping

skills, it is possible to improve ". . . neuroplasticity – or the brain's ability to rewire itself, forming new neural connections" (Terrasi and Crain De Galarce 37). The researcher set out to provide experiences with positive character strengths through dance in an attempt to retrain the brains of those effected by trauma.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Negative Effects of Trauma

Living with trauma can cause negative effects in those experiencing it such as those

described in the following quotation.

> During childhood and adolescence, exposure to chronic stress and trauma, especially
> without adequate adult support, can have harmful effects on the developing brain and
> neurochemical systems that help an individual adapt to stressful events. These biological
> changes affect the way a child or adolescent thinks, behaves, and relates to others. They
> can also undermine the child's growing sense of self. (Jennings 11-12)

The effects of trauma can produce life-long consequences, many of which are described in the

following sections of this thesis.

Emotional Impact and Social
Consequences

There is an increasing prevalence of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) which

correlate with and cause negative physical, emotional, social, and academic outcomes. The toxic

stress experienced due to trauma is known to have negative effects on the brain. "These brain

alterations can impact a person's physiologic stress response into perceiving a benign experience

as a potentially life-threatening event which can lead to development of maladaptive behavioral

and social coping skills" (Powell and Davis 319).

When students are living in survival mode, they are not able to think clearly. Their brains

and bodies are constantly in a state of fight, flight or freeze (Souers and Hall 28). Any small

stress which occurs during the school day can result in negative

social/emotional reactions from these students. Some of these responses may include withdrawal,

aggression, leaving the classroom without permission, becoming disengaged, arguing, and

shutting down (Souers and Hall 29). Oftentimes teachers do not realize that these reactions are

triggered because of trauma.

> To compound the problem, teachers who are unaware of the dynamics of complex trauma can easily mistake its manifestations as willful disobedience, defiance, or inattention, leading them to respond to it as though it were mere 'misbehavior.' When students struggle to focus on tasks or [to] complete assignments, teachers might interpret it as laziness or lack of motivation. Or when students isolate themselves, teachers may interpret this as a rejection of their own efforts to reach out, leading them to respond punitively, which only pushes students further into isolation. (Terrasi and Crain De Galarce 36)

> Other emotional implications of trauma include fear, anxiety and depression. Many

children who have experienced trauma do not develop appropriate social skills which impedes

building relationships and in turn interferes with mental health (Riter and Hildenbrand).

> If they cannot trust their caregivers to protect them, they develop insecure and disorganized attachment relationships with them, which can lead to relationship problems with peers and other adults. Children and teens exposed to trauma and adversity may have difficulty identifying, expressing, and managing emotions, further complicating social interactions. (Jennings 12)

> The limbic system is the emotional generating center of the brain and it also alerts the

body to potential dangers.

> . . . early explorations shape the limbic structures devoted to emotions and memory, but these structures can also be significantly modified by later experiences: for the better by a close friendship or a beautiful first love, for example, or for worse by a violent assault, relentless bullying or neglect. (Van Der Kolk 57)

> Thus, "When limbic cell communication is disrupted, children tend to show signs of

aggression or self-destruction" (Terrasi and Crain De Galarce 37). The combination of these

negative effects leads to difficulty building and maintaining positive relationships.

Cognitive Outcomes

The effects of trauma on the brain also negatively impact students academically. "Adversity and trauma affect brain development, resulting in changes in cognitive function such as attention, memory, reasoning, language development, problem solving and planning" (Jennings 12). Research has found that traumatized children have difficulty concentrating and regulating their emotions (Van Der Kolk 160). Children experiencing the negative effects of stress on the brain have a difficult time succeeding in school.

A child's number of ACEs are associated with a ". . . lower grade-point-average, decreased high school graduation rates, decreased IQ, as well as significant deficits in attention, abstract reasoning, long-term memory for verbal information, and reading ability" (Kataoka et al. 418). Studies have shown a correlation between a child's number of ACEs and their likelihood to struggle academically (Souers and Hall 29). ". . .when stress hormones repeatedly flood the brain, they have a negative effect on a range of executive functions, weakening children's concentration, language processing, sequencing of information, decision making, and memory" (Terrasi and Crain De Galarce 37).

Children who have experienced trauma often have difficulty processing information, communicating, problem-solving, and remaining engaged with the curriculum (Riter and Hildenbrand). ". . . these students demonstrated lower performance in both math and reading. In addition, three studies found that students with trauma exposure were more likely to be retained and repeat a grade" (Chafouleas et al. 43). Based on all the effects of trauma which can impede a student's success, it is very important for educators to become informed about trauma sensitive teaching techniques.

**The Creation of Trauma
Sensitive Schools**

In recent years, children who have had ACEs have become more prevalent in American

schools and could greatly benefit from mental health services. However, the majority of these

children do not receive the resources that they need (Souers and Hall 23).

> Children with mental health issues are not required to obtain professional mental health
> services, but they are legally required to attend school. Thus, school is the one place
> where we are guaranteed access to our trauma-affected children. Our students need us to
> create a trauma-sensitive learning environment for them. (Souers and Hall 24)

Educators can play an important role in helping students cope with adversity and become

successful in school and in life. "Historically, school-based outcomes have focused heavily on

academic domains, yet there has been increasing acceptance and attention to the connection

among social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health outcomes" (Chafouleas et al. 144).

Schools are often the number one place where students can build positive relationships and

become more resilient. Trauma-sensitive schools are providing children with a sense of safety

and belonging for all students. Evidence has shown that children who have a caring support

system at school, are able to build resilience and better focus on academics (Jennings 2-3).

Their Significance for At-Risk Students

Students who have experienced trauma are unfortunately at-risk of becoming unhealthy

and unsuccessful. These risks become all the more prevalent if the child's family has

experienced economic hardship or discrimination (Robbins et al. 1). "In the United States more

than 15 million children live below the federal poverty level" (Powell and Davis 320). These

children are even more likely to experience the negative effects of adversity.

> Nationally, 61% of youth in 2013-2014 reported being exposed to some form of violence
> or abuse in the past year with ethnic minorities at increased risk compared with majority
> populations due to such issues as being disproportionately affected by poverty,

discrimination, and other social determinants of health such as educational disparities. (Kataoka et al. 417)

Therefore, it is important for schools which serve children from low-income families to become informed about trauma and its effects. "Despite being at an increased risk for traumatic stress, ethnic minority youth are less likely to receive support services such as mental health care when it is needed. Thus, schools can play an important role in providing that care" (Kataoka et al. 417).

One way that schools can become more trauma sensitive is to make teachers aware of the common behaviors displayed by students effected by trauma. "Students respond to their difficult life situations in a variety of ways, often in the classic survival mode: by withdrawing (flight), acting out (fight), or going numb (freeze)" (Souers and Hall 28). Teachers need to be aware of these responses in order to react appropriately when students act out. Educators need to ". . . look beyond the behavior and focus on *motive*. If we can identify what may be motivating students to react, we can redirect them by providing alternative options for them to manage their stress" (Souers and Hall 32).

"While children who live in poverty are at a disproportionate risk of experiencing a high number of ACEs, protective factors can buffer the potentially negative effects of trauma exposure" (Powell and Davis 320). Schools can do their part to create a safe climate in which students feel cared for. "If the extended periods of time students spend in school take place in a safe, calm, and predictable learning environment, with adults and peers who show care and respect toward them, we can help them heal" (Jennings 50). All children, including those who have not been affected by trauma can benefit from these practices. These practices are especially important in ensuring the success of all students including those who could be labeled at-risk. Because students who are at-risk have often experienced trauma it is important to help build their

resilience during the school day since school may be their primary source for mental health care

(Kataoka et al. 417).

> Children need to develop a solid set of morals and values to determine right from wrong
> and to demonstrate a caring attitude toward others.' In today's environment, children and
> teens need to develop strengths, acquire skills to cope, recover from hardships, and be
> prepared for future challenges. They need to be resilient in order to succeed in life.
> (Healthy Children.org)

The Role of Building Relationships

One of the most important roles that schools can play in helping children to become more

resilient is creating a safe environment that provides positive relationships for students.

"Evidence shows that when a child has a supportive and caring relationship with his teachers and

peers, and feels a strong connection to his school, he builds the resilience he needs to cope with

his hardships and focus his mind on his schoolwork" (Jennings 3).

Sometimes children who have faced adversity have a hard time forming these positive

connections. "For students who have experienced trauma, forging strong relationships is not

simple. Because the source of many students' trauma is another human being, distrust and a

hesitancy to bond with others are common" (Souers and Hall 100). Children often respond to the

stresses of school with disruptive, defiant, or even aggressive behaviors. Just like their teachers,

sometimes their peers do not understand why they act this way.

"Trauma and adversity disrupt the development of attachment bonds that children need to

develop their full potential" (Jennings 48). Teachers can help to model healthy and caring

relationships for children and provide opportunities for them to build relationships with their

peers. "Kids growing up in a chronic 'state of alert' have learned early on to take cues from their

environment. They watch those around them – parents, teachers, other adults, and other children

– to identify the strategies people use to manage stress" (Souers and Hall 57). This is why it is

extremely important for teachers to remain calm when students are reacting in inappropriate ways. In such situations, teachers need to avoid a power struggle and help the students come out of survival mode. Teachers must know their students well and be able to address their needs above all else (Souers and Hall 62). "A consistent protective factor for children who experience a high number of ACEs includes nurturing environments in the home, school, or community" (Powell and Davis 320).

The Function of Character
Education

Children's brains have the amazing ability to adapt and recover (Souers and Hall 8). An important tool for helping children heal from trauma and cope with adversity is developing and integrating character education into the school environment. Teachers need to give students ". . .the skills and strategies to manage the intensity, through intentional teaching in a safe, predictable environment" (Souers and Hall 34). When children receive a strong character education, they are able to use their discovered strengths when difficulties occur in life. This fosters their resilience during times of crisis (Ginsburg and Jablow 177).

Children can begin to overcome the effects of trauma by focusing on their own strengths and skills in order to become more resilient. "Individual level protective mechanisms can include self-efficacy, self-regulation, pro-social behaviors, coping, and personality traits" (Powell and Davis 320). These important skills can be taught by incorporating lessons that allow students to understand their strengths.

Optimism is one character strength that can be used to help traumatized children heal. "Optimism has been found to be one of the key characteristics of resilient people. The brain can be rewired to be more optimistic through the experiences it is exposed to" (Young 1). According to Peterson and Seligmen, children who understand their strength in hope and

optimism have experienced reduced anxiety, better social relationships, and improved physical well-being. They are able to look toward a brighter future and solve problems in a productive way (576).

Other important character traits that help children to become more resilient include self-esteem, self-regulation, bravery, perseverance, creativity, and the ability to build relationships and collaborate with others (Young 1). All these traits have been known to help children heal from trauma and push through when difficulties arise in the future. The social-emotional learning that comes with character education can help children to ". . .recover the executive functions that may be impaired due to trauma exposure" (Jennings 69).

Thus, schools can help children overcome adversity by helping students learn more about their own character strengths and those of their peers. Jennings wrote the following with respect to these efforts:

> Educators may tend to focus on trauma-exposed deficits, dwelling on what's wrong with them rather than [on] the strengths they demonstrate. When teachers and other school staff recognize and validate strengths, they can help students build a more positive view of themselves, which can have transformative effects on an individual that can last a lifetime. (88)

When children are taught to appreciate their strengths and those of their classmates and teachers, they are able to build supportive relationships and grow toward a better future.

Building Resilience through
Creative Movement and
Choreography

Former First Lady of the United States of America, Michelle Obama, once said, ". . .no one should ever think that dance and music and theater are a luxury. . .because for so many of our students, they are truly necessities. They're the reason these kids show up [to school]." The arts are an important part of a child's education because they help children build skills and

strengths that will enable them to be successful for a lifetime. One of the positive outcomes of involvement in the arts is the effect they can have on the brain.

> During the brain's early years, neural connections are being made at a rapid rate. Much of what young children do as play -- singing, drawing, dancing—are natural forms of art. These activities engage all the senses and wire the brain for successful learning. When children enter school, these art activities need to be continued and enhanced. Brain areas are developed as the child learns songs and rhymes and creates drawings and finger paintings. The dancing and movements during play develop gross motor skills, and the sum of these activities enhances emotional well-being. And sharing their artwork enhances social skills. (Bonbright et al. 38-39)

Specifically, dance classes have been proven to be highly beneficial for children. "Increasing the heart rate through exercise delivers more oxygen to the brain, creating conditions for more effective learning" (Minton and Faber 37).

Although research suggests that the arts are highly beneficial for children, they are often removed from the curriculum in elementary schools due to budget cuts. In addition, the efforts to supply low-income students with an academically rich education, can also lead schools to remove the arts from curricula. However, some would argue that an education is not academically rich without incorporating the arts. "The arts are particularly effective for stimulating critical thinking because each [artistic] problem has multiple solutions" (Minton and Faber 55).

"Arts education has been comprehensively eroded in low-income districts, but is better established in affluent districts, and it is a core value in the country's most elite private schools. This suggests an enormous 'arts gap' in American education" (Rabkin and Redmond 12). Children who are at-risk of not successfully completing their K-12 education need the arts even more than those who are likely to succeed. As Michelle Obama commented, sometimes arts classes are the reason that students go to school every day. In fact, ". . . low-income students who were high arts participators did better in school and in life than peers who were low arts

participators" (Rabkin and Redmond 7). These children can greatly benefit from an arts

education but they often have less access to these opportunities.

> Children-at-risk (those with lower socioeconomic statuses, less family stability, etc.)
> benefit from arts-rich experiences in that they earn higher grades, are more likely to
> graduate from high school and further their education, and become engaged learners and
> citizens. The arts make education more equitable for all, regardless of external
> circumstances. (Bonbright et al. 10)

"Studies have found that socioeconomic status (SES) is associated with lags in brain

development, most dramatically in the areas associated with language development and

executive functions" (Jennings 20). Therefore, it is important for schools who serve students

with lower SES to incorporate programs that can improve upon these necessary areas for

academic success. Creative movement and choreography are natural methods for improving

executive functions by building skills in memory, problem solving, task flexibility, and planning

(Minton and Faber 142). When children learn and create dances, they must incorporate all these

skills.

Skills Gained through Dance Class

The arts, especially dance, can be capable of teaching children the skills necessary to

become resilient in the face of adversity. According to many authorities, developing life skills is

one way to deal with adversity.

Research done through the National Dance Education Organization identified numerous

skills that students can gain through an arts education. Some of these skills include an

understanding of mathematics and English Language Arts content, along with creating a positive

school climate, developing critical thinking and social skills, and promoting increased motivation

(Bonbright et al. 7).

Furthermore, ". . .several earlier studies have shown a correlation between student

involvement in the arts and the ability to think creatively. Another study found a relationship

between taking arts classes and improvements in student self-confidence" (Minton and

Hofmeister 67-68). Confidence is an important tool in building resilience.

> Dance class is extremely valuable in equipping students with important life skills.
> Evidence shows that incorporating dance into the curriculum can, among other benefits,
> improve student test scores, lower drop-out rates, facilitate knowledge transfer, foster
> teacher morale, and support the learning of underserved populations such as kinesthetic
> learners, special education students, and minorities. (Bonbright et al. 48-49)

> "A number of other researchers found dance class had a positive effect on student self-

esteem, self-knowledge, creativity, and social skills" (Minton and Hofmeister 68).

Collaborating with other students to create dances can help develop the above skills that foster

resilience.

The ability to work as a member of a team is another key trait found in resilient children.

Dance class can provide many opportunities for collaboration and developing the ability to work

on a team.

> Collaboration, an iterative process where people work together to accomplish shared
> objectives, is inherently part of many dance pedagogies, dance practices, and dance
> careers. Outside of dance, in a variety of disciplines, the ability to collaborate is prized as
> a highly valuable competency. (Schupp, "Teaching" 152)

> In dance class, students often work with partners or groups to choreograph and perform

dances. Through this form of teamwork, students are able to learn how to:

> work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams; exercise flexibility and willingness
> to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal; assume
> shared responsibility for collaborative work, and value the individual contributions made
> by each team member. (Schupp, "Teaching" 153)

> By working together to solve problems and create dances, students ". . .can build self-

confidence as well as enhance learning. It [teamwork] can also assist in encouraging students to

be both leaders and listeners" (Mainwaring and Krasnow 16). Working together with others is

also involved when students discuss and reflect on dances they created.

These skills among others gained in dance classes can help students to become more successful. Skills students learn in dance class are ". . . valuable to their education and future pursuits. Empathy, leadership and stewardship, communication, initiation and follow-through, and negotiation can be implicitly gained through these collaborative opportunities." (Schupp, "Teaching" 154)

Developing Resilience through
Creative Work in Dance

Dance class provides unique opportunities for children to build resilience through creative work. "Resilience is being able to bounce back from stress, challenge, tragedy, trauma or adversity. When children are resilient, they are braver, more curious, more adaptable, and more able to extend their reach into the world" (Young 1). Resilience is a capacity that can be strengthened in children through involvement in the arts, especially through dance.

Creative dance class provides opportunities for children to gain skills that have the potential for helping them cope with adversity.

> Dance learning organically calls on problem solving, multiple ways of learning, self-responsibility, community building, and empathy. Students become aware of these aptitudes, and are able to further enhance them, when explicitly foregrounded in their dance learning (Schupp, "Igniting" 85).

One way that dance class can help students to become more resilient is through the many opportunities for being involved in the creative process. Creative process has been described as, ". . .the process of teaching and learning using experience, information, stimuli, data, and ideas in new and different combinations to invent new and different, ideas, products or combinations" (Bonbright et al. 58). "Problem-solving is a creative process. Anything that strengthens their [the students'] problem-solving skills will nurture their resilience" (Young 1)

Students engage in creative problem solving through many dance class activities such as movement exploration, improvisation, and choreography. During movement exploration and improvisation, students create their own unique movements in response to words, ideas or images supplied by the dance teacher, while the newly created movements are later woven together to form a dance or choreography.

> Research confirms the potential benefits for integrating the creative processes of choreography into school curricula. Utilizing the choreographic process can provide insight into learning through the body that fosters the education of the whole child and creates a resource-rich learning context. It fosters multiple intelligences through creative problem solving and linguistic growth in reading and expressive communication, as well as enhanced interpersonal relationships expressed through social interaction and the development of social tolerance. (Humphreys and Kimbrell 84)

In dance class, students have the opportunity to engage both mind and body. All of Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences are incorporated and developed in a well-rounded dance class. For example, dancers are given time to collaborate with others on choreography which develops their interpersonal intelligence and promotes relationship building skills. Musical or rhythmic accompaniment and musical structure helps to incorporate musical intelligence. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence comes in numerous ways throughout class. "It involves gross and fine motor coordination in service of cognitive solutions to physical goals, including the aesthetic of dance" (Minton and Faber 11).

The above described activities can also help children to see situations from multiple points of view—a skill that is related to the character trait perspective. As indicated earlier, learning about perspective can foster resilience (Young 1). Creative work in dance, especially improvisation, can develop a student's perspective because it is related to thinking and working in divergent ways.

The explorative nature of improvisation invites the dancers' divergent thinking which generates numerous and different manifestations within the specific context. It is through divergent thinking that creativity is emerging. As neurological and psychological experiments have indicated, it is through divergent thinking that the capacity of humans to view a situation in a completely different light and possibilities is revealed. (Savrami 278)

Moving creatively can help students to understand themselves more deeply and learn to express their emotions as well. "With respect to emotional reactions and release of feelings (awareness of emotions) the brain is involved in dance through the limbic system, especially the amygdala in the temporal lobe, which appears to be associated with the emotional reactions associated with memories" (Savrami 277). In order to regulate their emotions, students need to become more aware of how they are feeling and creative work in dance can help them initiate this awareness.

Within the classroom, certain practices can be used to mark transitions, such as a slow arm-stretch accompanied by a song that signals the start of morning meeting. Over time, the stretch can be altered in speed, level, or movement quality and can be led by students in the class, who may further expand on it. This expansion gives one the sense of flexibility, relaxation, and resilience in responding to the unfamiliar, but depends upon the student's increasing ability to attend to somatic cues from the body. With recognition of internal feelings and needs, the student can respond to and regulate emotional experiences. He feels he can depend upon his own body to meet new challenges, to heal, to take care, and know limits. (Bonbright et al. 44-45)

Stress can negatively affect the brain, but creative work in dance also provides opportunities that can help it heal since such activities can calm or quiet the emotion-producing centers in the brain.

Stress can also cause the prefrontal cortex at the front of the brain to temporarily shut down. The prefrontal cortex is the control tower of the brain. It is involved in attention, problem solving, impulse control, and regulating emotion. These are known as 'executive functions.' Resilience is related to the capacity to activate the prefrontal cortex and calm the amygdala. When this happens, the physiological changes that are activated by stress start to reverse, expanding the capacity to recovering from, adapt to, or find a solution to stress, challenge or adversity. (Young 1)

Dance class allows students to build many skills that help calm and strengthen the brain's executive functions. This is especially true for the effect of creative dance on the prefrontal cortex. "Strengthening their [the brain's] executive functioning will strengthen the prefrontal cortex. This will help them [the students] manage their own behavior and feelings, and increase their capacity to develop coping strategies" (Young 1).

Dance class sets up routines and provides opportunities for social interactions and building relationships as well as for creative exploration. These opportunities also improve the brain's executive functions (Young 1). Independent thinking and decision-making skills also are strengthened when students engage in creative movement activities.

"To be creative in [an] improvisational context most importantly involves experimentation, curiosity, risk taking, playfulness, mental flexibility, metaphorical thinking, qualities that result [in] an 'animate movement with its processual dynamics'" (Savrami 278). In other words, when students create new dances on the spot through choreography, many skills that can help foster resilience are developed. The opportunity to experiment, take risks, and be curious and playful are all part of the creative movement experience.

Furthermore, the physical exercise involved in a creative movement class can help children to become more resilient as well.

> A research team based at Princeton University found that physical activity reorganizes the brain so that its response to stress is reduced and anxiety is less likely to interfere with normal brain function. Running produced a large increase in the number of new neurons in the hippocampus — a brain region shown to regulate anxiety. (Kelly 1)

Thus, physical activity reduces stress, one of the major components that can produce trauma and reduce resilience.

Summary

Dance class allows for opportunities to strengthen the brain and body. It also can also improve skills that help children cope with adversity and become more successful. "The right experiences can shape the individual, intrinsic characteristics of a child in a way that will build their resilience" (Young 1). Dance teachers may not be able to keep their students from experiencing toxic stress and trauma in situations that arise outside class. However, they can help students gain certain skills and strengths that will help them to become more resilient in the face of adversity.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between student involvement in choreography classes to their confidence in character strengths that foster resilience. The researcher created and implemented a dance unit for the study. This unit provided various stimuli to determine if students could better understand these strengths through the choreographic process. This chapter includes a description of the research setting, research design, participants, research instruments, methods of data collection for the research and how the data would be analyzed. Some of the initial plans for this study were adjusted due to the COVID-19 pandemic since in-person lessons could not be completed. Some of the participants who originally provided parental consent did not consistently attend the virtual academy and had to be replaced. The essential questions in this study were:

Q1   Does involvement in dance making build students' character strengths?

Q2   Which character strengths are best developed through dance making?

Q3   Which inspirations for dance making relate most thoroughly to the selected
       character strengths?

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher submitted a narrative application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This narrative briefly described the purpose of the study along with the methods, data collection and analysis procedures, data handling, as well as the risks and benefits. The consent and assent forms that would be used to gain permission from parents and

student participants were also included. The narrative was approved by the IRB and shortly after, the researcher also received approval from her school leader to begin the study (see appendix).

Research Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in a public charter school in New York State where the researcher teaches dance to all the K-6 students. The city in which the research took place has been ranked as having one of the highest poverty levels in the country. Most of students at the researcher's school are considered to be at-risk. Of the student population, 94% are eligible for free or reduced lunch and 15% of the students qualify for special education support. Students who live in a low-income household are eligible to receive free or reduced lunch at school. Many of the students have reported incidents of trauma or toxic stress outside of school such as violence, abuse, and poverty in the home which affects their resilience. The above percentages are displayed in Figure 1 below.
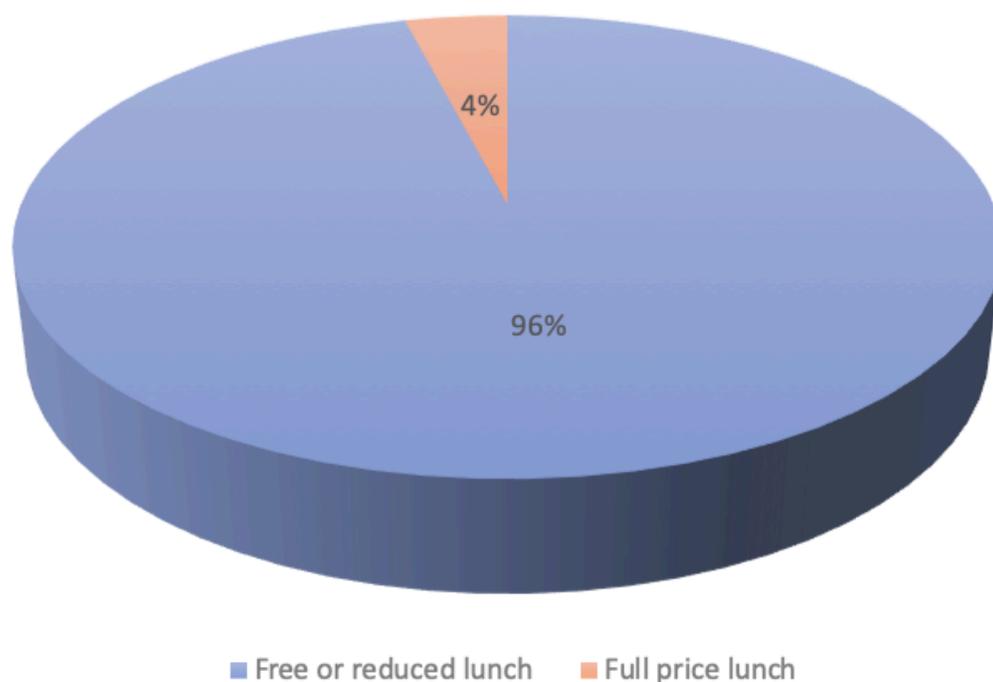

Figure 1: Per cent of students on free or reduced lunch and those who purchase a full price lunch.

The school is one of the only elementary schools with a dance program in the area. Students at this school are enrolled based on a lottery system. In 2019, the school received 225 applications for 75 kindergarten seats and a total of 644 applications for approximately 100 seats overall.

The participants in this study were fifth grade students originally chosen from two out of the four fifth grade dance classes. These two classes were chosen because the researcher was advised to narrow down the number of potential participants and those two classes were typically more engaged in choreography lessons. All the fifth-grade classes began participating in the research unit curriculum in February 2020 although only students from the two selected classes were the subjects. Fourteen signed parent consent forms and student assent forms were collected for participants and the first lesson was implemented for all fifth-grade students at the school.

In mid-March, the school closed and transitioned into a virtual academy due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in New York State. Therefore, the remaining lessons in the unit were taught through an online video conference platform. Many of the participants who consented to be a part of the study attended the virtual academy sparingly or not at all. Therefore, the researcher sought to receive signed consent and assent forms from the students who were consistently present in the lessons. This meant adding new participants to the study at that time.

Nine students ended up participating fully in the study. These students met with the researcher in the virtual classes for an hour once per week for fourteen weeks. They participated in a choreography unit in which the teacher presented varying stimuli which were focused on six of the character strengths. The specific character strengths were chosen for this study based on traits that foster resilience. These strengths were: teamwork, perseverance, perspective, hope/optimism, social intelligence, and self-control.

Research Unit Design

The researcher created a unit in which she highlighted the six Positivity Project character strengths that foster resilience which were noted above. Each lesson began with a review of the character strength on which the lesson was based to activate student background knowledge. For each lesson in the unit, students were asked to observe an inspiration in the form of a video, artwork, poem or other content that exemplified a targeted character strength. Then the students would respond to the selected inspiration related to the character strength, followed by connecting with the inspiration by using their memories and imagination to improvise movements to be used in a dance (Minton 3). The lessons were planned for in-person instruction. However, the majority of the lessons were taught live over an online video platform due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Finally, the students were given a specific choreographic task based on the inspiration and which included the movements they had improvised. A structured choreography assignment was given for each lesson to scaffold students through the creative process during the lessons. After adequate choreography and rehearsal time, the students were asked to share their dances with the class. Since these classes were taught, for the most part, remotely, the greater number of the dances were performed as solos.

The researcher used quotations and a video as the inspiration to help students connect with the character strength teamwork. In these lessons, the students were also instructed to use two or more of the elements of dance and create a piece that had a sense of being a whole. Students were encouraged to express conflict as well as teamwork in their performances.

The next character strength that the unit focused on was perseverance. The researcher introduced a poem about this strength and students created their own version of the poem using

the researcher's prompts. Then the students circled words from their poems to focus on when creating their choreography.

The lesson on hope/optimism included several examples. The choreographic task was based on a painting in which people were walking out of darkness and into a keyhole of light. The students discussed how the painting related to the character strength and then created dances using the choreographic technique accumulation.

In the fourth series of lessons, the class discussed the character strength of self-control and the researcher introduced them to a video of The Marshmallow Experiment. In the video, children had a marshmallow placed in front of them and were told that if they waited 15 minutes to eat it while they were unsupervised, they could have another one to eat. Students were then asked to create a dance that expressed the feeling of wanting something but holding out for a better reward.

The fifth character strength the students studied was perspective. After discussing several optical illusions, the choreography was based on a cartoon in which two characters are standing on either side of a number. One is convinced it is the number 9 while the other is sure he is looking at the number 6. Students were asked to create a 16-count movement sequence and perform it facing in four different directions so that the audience could see the phrase from different perspectives.

Finally, the researcher presented the lessons on social intelligence and connected this strength to empathy. The students watched a clip from the movie "Inside Out" in which the character Sadness is able to comfort her friend by understanding his emotions. After discussing the importance of social intelligence and characteristics of people who are strong in this area, the students collaborated over a video conference to create a final dance. The researcher asked the

students to name as many emotions as they could. Then each student choreographed four counts of movement that expressed one of those emotions. The students were asked to perform this sequence in a way that related to social intelligence by using the following lesson sequence. The teacher performed her four-count emotion dance, then called on a student to copy her emotional sequence followed by and then sharing their dance. Then the next student copied the dance of the last student before sharing what he or she created. This continued until every student had the opportunity to experience another's emotion dance as well as sharing their own dance.

A more detailed description of how the researcher connected class activities to the each of the six character strengths throughout the series of classes along with questions she asked to motivate the students and the framework she used to focus creative work can be found in Appendix C.

Instrumentation

Three instruments were used for data collection in this study. A pre-survey was given at the beginning of the research unit and the same survey was given again at the end as a post-survey. The researcher also conducted a one-on-one exit interview with each participant to assess possible changes in their character traits in a more detailed way and as an added representation of their growth in resilience.

Character Strength Pre and
Post-Survey

The questions in the character strength survey were focused on the six Positivity Project character strengths that students studied throughout the unit. There were twelve questions total with two based on each character strength. Students were asked to rate themselves based on the statements. They rated themselves numerically based on the following scale: 1 – strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3 – I don't know, 4 – agree, or 5 – strongly agree. The statements were

adapted from Positivity Project character cards which describe the traits of people who are strong in each area. For example, the statements for the character strength of teamwork were "I work well as a member of a group" and "the success of the group is just as important as my own success." A copy of the full character strength survey can be found in Appendix B.

Student Exit Interview

In order to gather more information from participants about the results of the study, the researcher created an exit interview. The researcher planned to interview each participant individually. However, because of the unforeseen transition to a virtual learning platform, students completed the interview questions independently in an open-ended response format. The researcher hoped to better understand what character strengths, if any, the participants felt more confident in as a result of the study.

The interview included five questions. "What have you learned about yourself during this unit?" "Which character strengths do you think you have further developed as a result of the creative work you have done in this class? Do you believe you have learned more about teamwork, perseverance, perspective, hope/optimism, self-control or perspective?" In responses to these two questions, the students were asked to explain the reasons for their answers.

The following question was the third one in the interview. "Do you know more about the character strengths of your classmates after this class? If so, what have you learned? Which of the six character strengths were involved in what you learned about your classmate or classmates?" The fourth question in the interview was: "How can you use the character strengths of perseverance, social intelligence, hope/optimism, self-control, teamwork, and perspective in this unit outside of dance class?" For the final question students were asked to describe a specific example in which a part of this dance class taught them about one or more of the character

strengths and how they were able to apply this understanding to a situation outside this class. The exit interview form can also be viewed in Appendix B.

Data Analysis Methods

The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze data from this study. The quantitative data was collected through the pre-survey and post-survey responses. The qualitative data was collected through the exit interviews.

Quantitative Analysis

In order to understand if any growth was achieved after the research unit, the researcher compared the ratings from the pre-survey to those of the post-survey. If the participants rated themselves higher, it meant that they agreed more strongly with the statement based on a certain character strength. The researcher looked for overall improvements in ratings. The data was also grouped by character strength to see if the students improved more for any character strength in comparison to their improvement on others.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis was based on the responses to the five exit interview questions. The students were given an assignment at the end of the unit to respond to these questions. There statements were either recorded verbally or in writing.

The researcher then transcribed any verbal responses and aligned them with written responses. Then the responses from each participant were compared to find similarities in ideas. This data was used as further evidence to answer the research questions. The researcher wanted to learn if students felt more confident in specific character strengths. Responses were also analyzed to find out if any inspiration was most helpful toward better understanding and improving each of the character strengths.

Summary

The methodology chapter of this thesis explained the research setting and participants involved in the study. It discussed the dance unit which was taught in order to explore the research questions. It also identified the strategies used to obtain and analyze data. A pre and post-survey as well as an exit interview were used to gather information about confidence in character strengths that build resilience. These two methods provided both quantitative and qualitative data meant to inform the researcher about the outcomes of the choreography unit. A detailed analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

This thesis study examined the impact of choreography classes on building or developing specific character strengths. The chosen character strengths which were the focus of this research are known to build resilience which is important for all students, especially those who have been affected by trauma. The focus of this study was also to discover which character strengths are best developed through the dance making process.

Based on the goals of this study, the researcher developed a 5th grade dance unit in which students had an in-depth experience discussing each of the six chosen strengths. Then they were asked to use specific choreographic tools to create a dance based on an inspiration related to each strength. In the pre- and post-surveys and exit-interview, the researcher aimed to identify the impact of this unit on the students' character strengths. This chapter discusses the comparison between the pre-survey and post-survey data and exit interview responses as well as any correlations with the character strengths.

Quantitative Analysis of Data
from Character Strength
Survey

The quantitative data was collected through a pre-survey completed by students before participating in the research unit as well as a post-survey completed at the end of the unit. The two surveys were identical to help the researcher discover if participants rated themselves higher on any of the statements after completing the unit.

Students were asked to rate themselves using a five-part Likert scale. The survey presented two statements related to each of the six selected character strengths. These statements were adapted from explanations of the strengths as they were described by The Positivity Project. Bar graphs were created and used to depict changes in the students' responses between the pre-survey and post-survey. A compilation of the students' responses to two statements pertaining to each strength were included in the graphs below to show any related improvements or changes in responses.

Analysis of Students' Responses to
Teamwork Character Strength

Figure 1 displays the outcome of the analysis of student responses to the first two statements on the survey which related to teamwork. Statement one was "I work well as a member of a group." The students' responses to this statement were a unique outcome in this study because they remained the same at the end of the study as they were at the beginning.

The above responses could be described in the following way. Three students did not know if they agreed with the statement, while five agreed and four strongly agreed. These responses may have been different if the students had been able to spend the amount of time originally planned for group work in the unit. However, COVID-19 restrictions led to having the students work mostly independently during the study, leading to the timing changes. The second statement, "The success of the group is just as important as my own success" was also related to the teamwork character strength. Here the students' responses showed some improvement. All the students either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement by the end of the unit. Whereas before the unit began, some students did not agree or were unsure about how to respond to this statement.
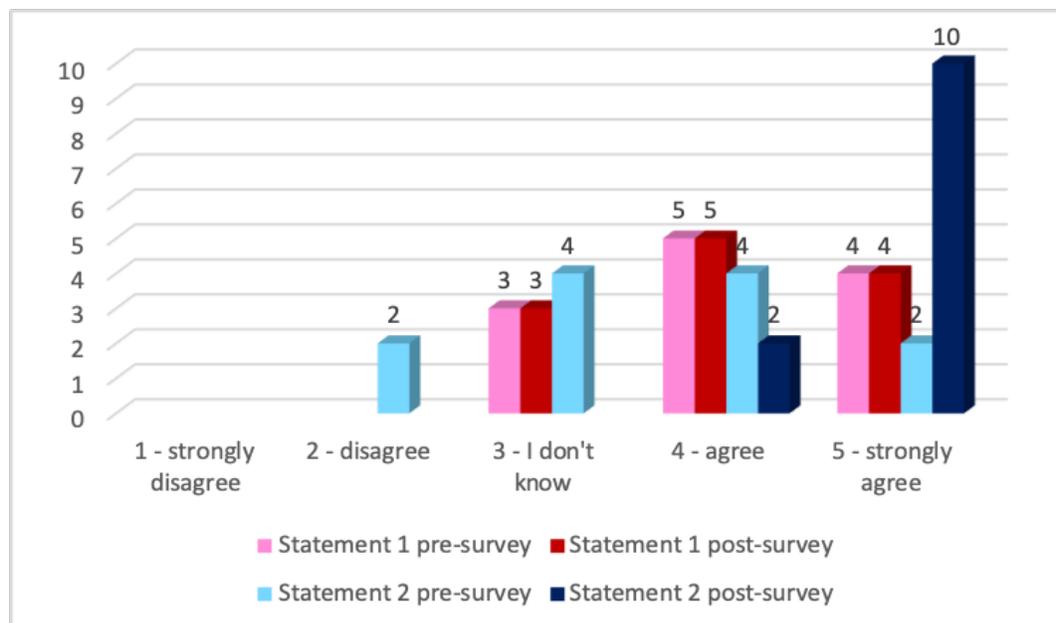
Figure 2: Analysis of students' pre- and post- responses to teamwork statement.

Analysis of Students' Responses to
Perseverance Character
Strength

The next two statements on the survey were "I complete what I start even if it is hard"

and "I never give up." These statements were meant to embody the character strength

perseverance. The results for these statements are displayed in Figure 2. On the pre-survey, one

student disagreed with the first of these statements and two students indicated they did not know.

On the post-survey, no students disagreed with this same statement, while only one student did

not know and the rest of the students either agreed or strongly agreed. For statement four or the

second of the above statements, five more students strongly agreed that they never give up by the

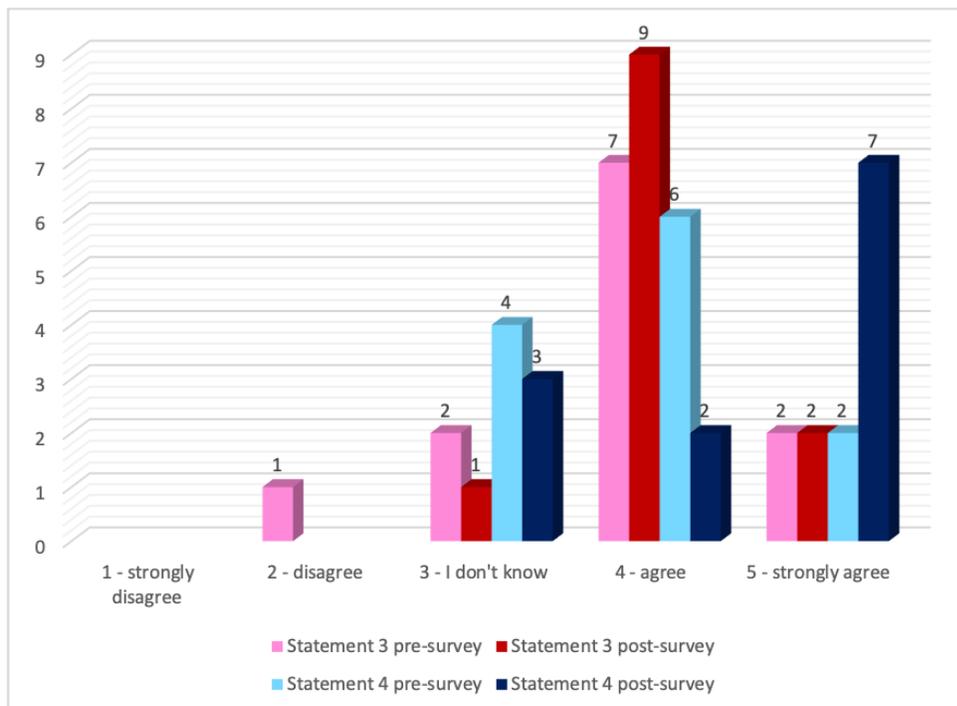end of the study in comparison to the way they felt before the study.

Figure 3: Analysis of students' pre- and post-responses to perseverance statements.

Analysis of Students' Responses to
Perspective Character Strength

Statement five on the survey was, "I can understand other people's points of view." Before participating in the research unit, three students were not sure if they agreed or disagreed with this statement. In addition, three students agreed, and six students strongly agreed with this statement. However, after participating in the dance unit, the majority of the students agreed with the above statement. While fewer students rated themselves in the "strongly agree" category after the study, there were no longer any students who were unsure when responding to this statement.

The sixth statement was, "I care about how other people are feeling." This statement was also related to the character strength perspective. Before the unit, one student strongly disagreed with this statement, two students did not know how to respond, seven students agreed, which was the majority, and two students strongly agreed. At the end of the study, all the students either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, with the majority strongly agreeing.
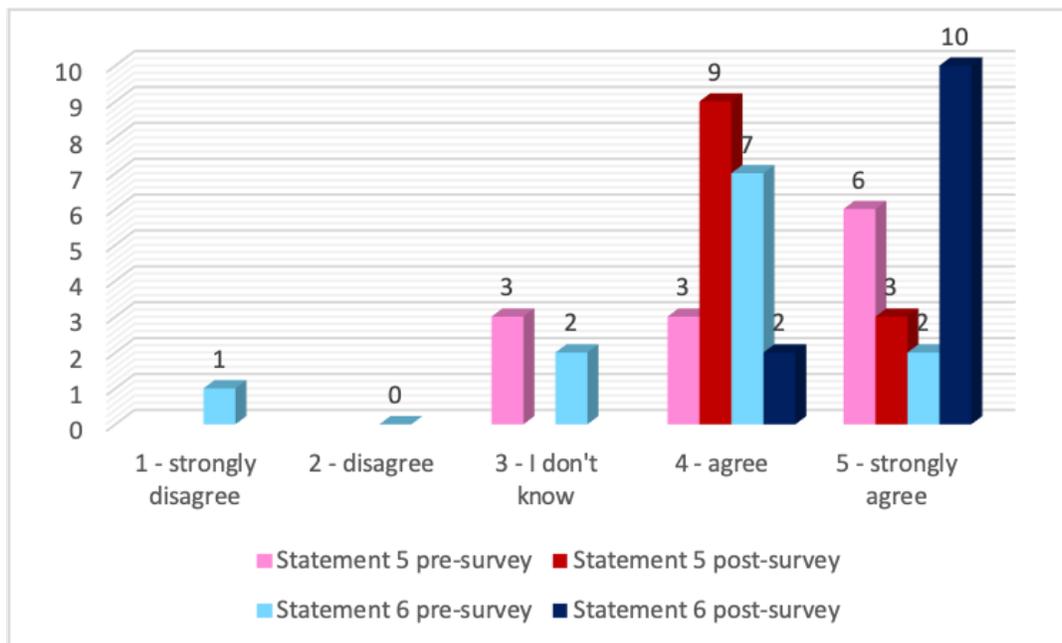
Figure 4: Analysis of students' pre- and post-responses to perspective statements.

Analysis of Students' Responses to
Hope/Optimism Character
Strength

Statement seven and eight were related to the character strength of hope/optimism. The

first of these statements was, "My belief in myself gets me through hard times." At the beginning

of the study, one student said that they disagreed with this statement. At the onset of the study,

three students did not know how they felt about it. Three students also agreed with statement

seven and five strongly agreed with this same statement at the beginning of the study. There

were no students who disagreed with either statement at the end of the study, although one fewer

student responded that he or she did not know in response to statement seven. For the "strongly

agree" response, one fewer student responded this way for statement seven than on the pre-

survey. Statement eight was, "I expect the best from my future and work to achieve it." When the

study began, one student disagreed with this statement, one student did not know, four agreed,

and six strongly agreed. By the end of the study with respect to the second statement, five

students agreed that they expected the best from their future and would work to achieve it, while

six strongly agreed. The same number selected "strongly agree" for the eighth statement at the beginning and end of the study.
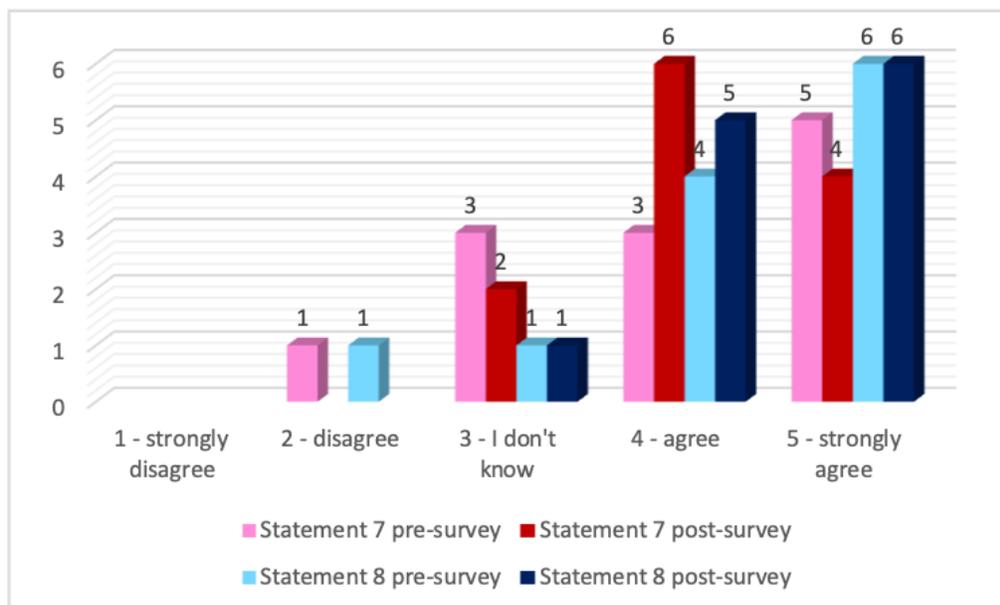

Figure 5: Analysis of students' pre- and post-responses to hope/optimism statements.

*Analysis of Students' Responses to
Social Intelligence Character
Strength*

The ninth statement on the survey was, "It is important to listen to the ideas and opinions of others." On the pre-survey, one student disagreed with this statement, one responded he or she did not know, six agreed and four strongly agreed. On the post-survey, no students disagreed with the ninth statement. Overall, six students still agreed, and two more students strongly agreed with this statement on the post-survey than on the pre-survey.

Statement ten, which was also related to the social intelligence character strength, stated, "I notice my own thoughts and feelings." On the pre-survey, one student strongly disagreed with this statement, one student disagreed, and two students did not know. The rest of the students either agreed or strongly agreed. On the post-survey no students strongly disagreed or disagreed, although the same number of students responded that they did not

know or agreed with this statement on the post-survey as on the pre-survey. However, two additional students responded that they strongly agreed to statement ten on the post-survey.
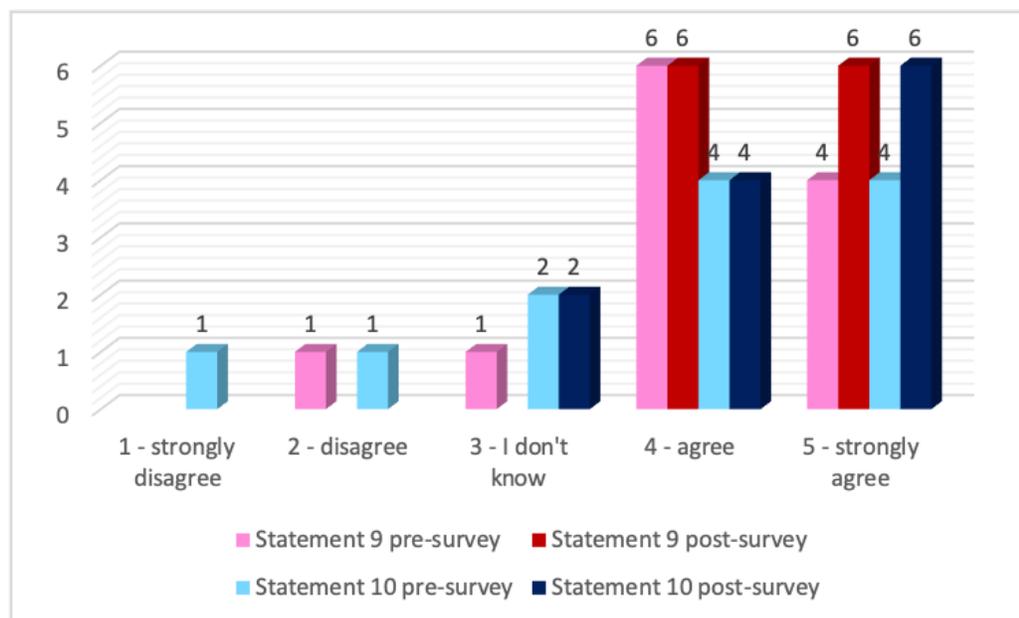
Figure 6: Analysis of students' pre- and post-responses to social intelligence statements.

Analysis of Students' Responses to
Self-Control Character Strength

The final two statements on the survey were "I can control my emotions and behaviors" and "I know that my actions now will impact myself and others." While the number of students who responded "strongly agree" increased by three on the post-survey for statement eleven, there was also one additional student who disagreed with this statement. For statement twelve, the only change from the pre-survey to the post-survey responses was that one more student agreed with the twelfth statement after the study and one less student indicated he or she did not know.

Figure 7: Analysis of students' pre- and post-responses to self-control statements.

Qualitative Analysis
of Exit Interviews

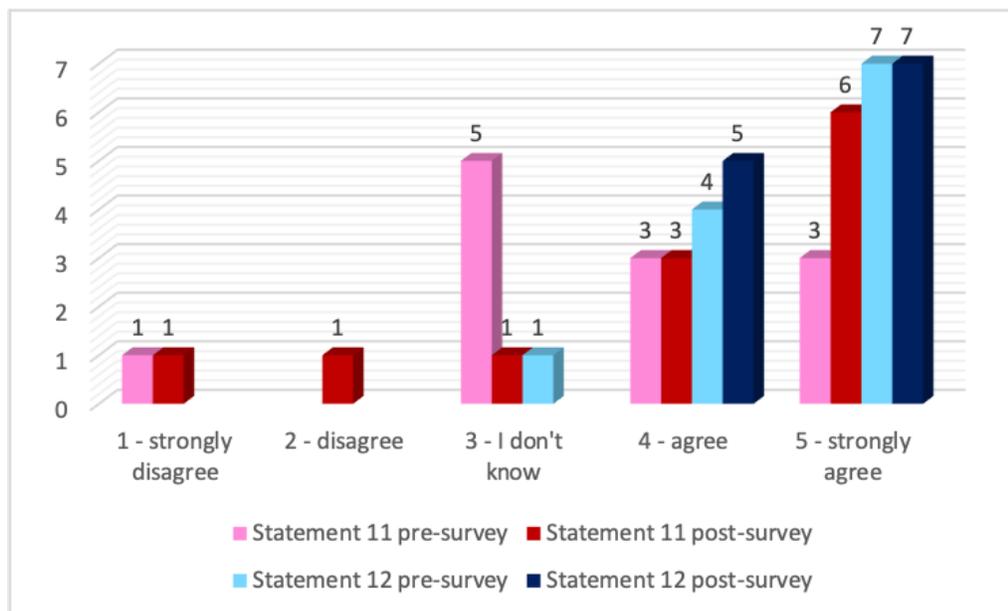Growth in confidence and better understanding of character strengths were two themes

that were present in the exit interview responses. The first question participants responded to

was, "What have you learned about yourself during this unit?" While many character strengths

were mentioned in responses, teamwork was a common trend. Four participants noted that the

unit increased their confidence in the character strength of teamwork. A couple of students also

made a connection to the character strength perspective. Every student who responded to

question one stated that they learned more about the character strengths than they understood

previously. One student stated,

> One thing I have learned about myself during this unit is [that] I have lots of teamwork, I
> love to work with other people. I have a lot of hope and perspective because I can see
> different sides. I have self-control which is really easy to use. I also learned that I love to
> dance.

Another student said,

> Something I learned about myself during this unit is I am capable of doing things I didn't know I was capable of when I can prove to others and show them that I can stand taller than they see me. Also, I know how to work with people and I know I have to listen to their points of view.

The second question was, "Which character strengths do you think you have further developed as a result of the creative work you have done in this class? Do you believe you have learned more about teamwork, perseverance, social intelligence, hope, self-control or perspective? Please explain the reasons for your answer." In this answer, some students said that they learned more about multiple character strengths. Five students believed that they learned the more about self-control, three responded with perseverance, three emphasized social intelligence, and three mentioned teamwork. Two students said they learned more about perspective and one student said that they learned more about hope/optimism specifically. One student said, "I feel like I have all of those character strengths inside me and I use different ones at different times."

Third the students were asked, "Do you know more about the character strengths of your classmates after this class? If so, what have you learned? Which of the six character strengths were involved in what you learned about your classmate or classmates?" All the students who responded stated that they did know more about the character strengths of their classmates after completing the unit. One student said, "They might not be strong in the same character strengths as me. They might also be stronger in strengths that I'm not strong in." Four students answered that teamwork, perseverance, and self -control played a part in understanding the character strengths of others. Three referenced social intelligence and two said that perspective and hope/optimism were involved when answering this same question.

Next the participants responded to the following question, "How can you use the character strengths of perseverance, social intelligence, hope/optimism, self-control, teamwork,

and perspective in this unit outside of dance class?" Four students noted generally that they plan to use their character strengths to help others outside of school. One participant indicated that he already noticed he was using perseverance more because he was able to teach his little sister how to throw a frisbee and neither of them gave up during the process. Five students said that they felt they noticed their emotions more and will use social intelligence and self-control to stay calm outside of dance class.

The last question was, "Please describe a specific example of which part of this dance class taught you about one or more of the character strengths. For example, did any of the ideas or inspirations for creating movements and making dances connect more easily or more readily with specific character strengths." Four students said The Marshmallow Test helped them to better understand why developing self-control is important. Five students said that the lesson on social intelligence helped them to better understand empathy. Four of those students specifically referenced the clip from "Inside Out." One student said that the Wisdom of Geese video was the best for helping her understand the strength of teamwork and one student referenced the Perspective cartoon saying, ". . . the two guys were looking at the number from either side and arguing if it was a six or nine but they looked at it from two different perspectives." Another student believed that every example and discussion in the unit helped her to better understand character strengths that build resilience. A more detailed description of the content included in the above lessons can be found in Appendix C.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore any correlation between choreography classes and the ability for students to improve character strengths that build resilience. The research involved twelve participants from two fifth grade classes at the elementary school where the researcher teaches dance. The data from the study was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. This data was collected with a pre and post-survey as well as an exit interview. The aim of the study was to answer three essential questions:

Q1   Does involvement in dance making build students' character strengths?

Q2   Which character strengths are best developed through dance making?

Q3   Which inspirations for dance making relate most thoroughly to the selected character strengths?

Research Findings

The study showed there was a positive correlation between student involvement in dance making and building character strengths. All the students' post-survey responses demonstrated an increased confidence and involvement with the character strengths at some level when compared to the responses on the pre-survey. The students' statements based on the character strengths teamwork and perspective had the highest average increase in the "agree" and "strongly agree" categories of responses on the post-test. This outcome was followed closely by the averaged positive increases for the character strengths of perseverance and self-control. The

character strengths that showed the least averaged increase in terms of the "agree" and "strongly agree" categories of responses were for hope/optimism and social intelligence. Therefore, while different students may have had improvements in individual strengths, the highest number of students improved in terms of teamwork and perspective after participating in the research unit.

The first question in the exit interview, "what have you learned about yourself during this unit" also revealed that the majority of students noted improvements in the strengths of teamwork and perspective. Student responses on this interview also suggested that students felt more confident in their own character strengths along with having a better understanding of the strengths of their classmates as an outcome of this study. This finding is important because the teaching strategies used in this research will be important tools in building strong relationships which is also known to build resilience. Students also discussed ways in which they intend to use what they learned in the research unit outside of dance class.

The final exit interview question asked students to discuss which choreographic inspiration was most helpful in creating a better understanding of the related character strength. It was interesting to discover that almost all the students listed a video as the most impactful inspiration. Perhaps this suggests that video material is likely to resonate with students and can most easily be interpreted during the choreographic process.

Limitations to the Study

Although the outcome of this study demonstrated a positive relationship between dance making and increased confidence in the targeted character strengths, it is important to note some limitations. The most challenging aspect of this study was that the majority of the research unit was taught after the school transitioned to fully remote instruction due to COVID-19. This unanticipated difficulty led to some changes in plans for the researcher. As a result, the

observation rubric element that was meant for the use of classroom teachers was eliminated because students were not in school and could not be observed in their classrooms.

Although, initially there were fourteen participants from two fifth grade classes participating, many of those students did not attend the virtual classes with any consistency. This meant the researcher had to invite new students from other fifth grade classes who were attending the virtual classes more reliably to become involved in her project. This change of plans also necessitated getting consent from the parents of the newly involved students. Virtual consent was given from these parents through E-signatures. Eventually, twelve students who attended consistently were used as participants in the research but some of these were not the same as those in the original group. Luckily, the unit, including the research instruments, was implemented for all fifth grade students at the school and was not just integrated in the lessons for the original participants. The new participants signed the assent forms when they returned to school to participate in the Hybrid model at the beginning of the fall semester to ensure that their responses could be used in the study.

Other limitations included the small sample size and potential research bias since the researcher was also the students' dance teacher. To go along with this issue, the researcher had also been teaching dance to many of these students in the same setting for up to four years at the time of the study. Students at the researcher's school also have lessons on The Positivity Project character strengths from their classroom teachers every year. This means the background knowledge that these students have in the character strengths may be far greater than the understanding students have at other schools. Therefore, research in this area should be expanded to participants who go to different schools or have not participated in choreography classes of this type before. It is also possible that students who originally handed in consent/assent forms

on time and those who attended the virtual classes consistently, are likely to have somewhat stable home lives. Therefore, it is hard to determine whether the students who are most affected by trauma and adversity were the same students participated in this study. More research should be conducted to support the concept that choreography classes can foster character strengths that build resilience.

Recommendations for
Further Research

Evidence from this study suggests that choreography classes can help improve confidence in the character strengths. Further research should be conducted to determine if these strengths truly lead to life-long resilience. In order to obtain a more accurate outcome, this study should also be expanded to other schools and student populations. The participants in this study comprise a somewhat specialized population because they attend an arts-focused school and had background knowledge of the character strengths involved in the study. However, further research could determine if students without such a background would benefit from the same choreography unit as well. The research unit was also focused on selected character strengths and the connected inspirations. Thus, more research is needed to determine if choreography focused on other inspirations would also improve confidence in these character strengths.

Another expansion on this study could be to involve participants who have knowingly had Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). That way if the study does improve their confidence in the character strengths, researchers could follow-up to understand the effect these strengths have in healing from trauma. The researcher believes that there is still a lot of work to be done to determine the full effects of dance class and dance making on building resilience.

Summary

  This research suggested that students who attend classes in character strength focused choreography can improve their confidence in these strengths. The researcher believes that these same character strengths could be improved in any dance class that includes dance-making. Further research needs to be conducted to determine if this is true. According to this research project, the character strengths of teamwork, perseverance, perspective, hope/optimism, social intelligence, or self-control could be key in building resilience in students. In turn, resilience can help those students affected by trauma to heal and become more successful in life. Therefore, based on the findings in this study, and with more research, dance class could be determined to be the key to fostering resilience.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL DOCUMENTS

Institutional Review Board

DATE: December 20, 2019

TO: _____
FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1515676-2] Fostering Resilience: Integrating Positive Character
                          Strengths with Dance Making Skills to Help Young Children
                          Cope with Adversity
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: December 20, 2019
EXPIRATION DATE: December 20, 2023

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The University of
Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT
according to federal regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence with our records for a donation of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Morse at 970-351-1910 or
nicole.morse@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all
correspondence with this committee.

October 12, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

Ms. _____ has my approval to conduct her research at_____.
I support her attempt to correlate student involvement in a dance program with the development
of positive character strengths. I have reviewed her proposal for the research entitled, *Fostering
Resilience: Integrating Positive Character Strengths with Dance Making Skills to Help Young
Children Cope with Adversity.* I agree that the study may help demonstrate that all students,
including children who are considered at-risk, should receive a quality dance education.

Sincerely,

███████████████, Ed.D.
Chief Educational Officer and Co-Founder
_____

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO
(Parent/Guardian Consent)

Project Title: Fostering Resilience: Integrating Positive Character Strengths with Dance Making Skills to Help Young Children Cope with Adversity.

Researcher: _____, Graduate Student at the University of Northern Colorado, School of Theatre Arts & Dance, Extended Studies Division

Phone Number: _____   **E-mail:** _____

With the help of my students, I am researching how children can become more resilient by taking dance class. I will be presenting a new dance unit to my 5th grade students this year. In this unit, students will be asked to create new dances using the Positivity Project character strengths as inspiration. The character strengths included in this project are: teamwork, perseverance, social intelligence, hope/optimism, self-control, and perspective. If you grant permission <u>and if your child indicates to us a willingness to participate</u>, he or she will answer a pre and post on-line survey along with interview questions answered at the end of the semester about what they learned. The participating students will also be observed three times during the semester based on the selected character strengths of strengths of teamwork, perseverance, social intelligence and self-control.

The aim of this research is to discover how dance making based on the positive character strengths can aid in their development and build more resilient students. The research will consist of using a variety of character strengths to guide the students through the choreographic process. This topic is important because many students experience toxic stress from a young age. This can have a negative effect on the brain and decrease academic success rates along with increasing future health risks. Dance is known to improve core life skills.

Page 1 of 2_____
(Parent's initials here)

This study will involve minimal risks. The participants will be attending their usual dance class. They will experience a new unit in choreography that is based on character strengths which foster resilience. At the beginning of the study, students may be uncomfortable collaborating with classmates to create dances. They may also be uncomfortable performing for their classmates and dance teacher. They could experience minor mental or physical fatigue from taking part in a creative movement class. However, these are usual discomforts experienced in creative dance class. The students have experienced the creative movement process before during different types of dance making exercises.

This is a confidential study and every effort will be made to protect your child's identity. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report that I make public, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify your child. A code system will be used to identify all participant responses including the pre-test, post-test, interview responses, and teacher observations. No actual names will be used. I will use only codes or pseudonyms to identify students in the study. The goal of the research is to simply document the success of incorporating positive character strengths into the choreographic process and in turn build more resilient students.

The completed consent forms will be locked in a file cabinet in my home until I bring them to the University of Northern Colorado's campus next summer where they will be stored in a locked file cabinet in Crabbe Hall, room 308, the office of Christy O'Connell-Black, Dance Education MA co-coordinator. All data and consent forms will be destroyed after three years.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to allow your child to take part in the study. Please retain one copy of this letter for your records.

Thank you for assisting me with my research.

Sincerely,

Ms. ██████████████████

*Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, Office of Research, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

_____   _____
Child's Full Name (please print)   Child's Birth Date (month/day/year)

_____   _____
Parent/Guardian's Signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher's Signature   Date

ASSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO
(Child Assent Form)

Hi!

I'm working on a master's degree at the University of Northern Colorado. I will be doing research on how dance class can benefit children in many ways. That means that I am studying the ways in which the skills students learn in dance class can help them to be successful both in school and in everyday life. I am going to focus on how students use their Positivity Project character strengths in dance class. I will be rolling out a new dance unit for the 5th grade classes. In this unit, students will create dances based on some of the character strengths. I want to see if teaching dance lessons in this way can help students become more confident and resilient.

If you want to work with me, you will be a part of this study. Just like a normal dance class, you will be asked to create new choreography to share with your class and dance teachers. However, you will be creating dances in new ways and diving deeper into some of the Positivity Project character strengths through your dance making activities. You will fill out a survey on-line about yourself in terms of the character strengths at the beginning and end of the class. I will also ask you some interview questions at the end of the class to find out your thoughts about what you learned. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions and there won't be any score or grade for the survey or interview. I will keep track of what you say, but I won't even write down your name. It should only take about 10 minutes for you to answer the survey questions and another 5 minutes at the end of the class for an interview. Your classroom teacher and I will also observe you based on a few of the character strengths.

Just like any other dance class, you will need to be careful when you are moving and choreographing so that you don't get hurt. Your parents have said it's okay for you to be a part of this unit, but you don't have to. It's up to you. The whole class will take part in the new class even if they are not in the study, but if you are in the study but then you decide that you don't want to be a part of the study, you can let me know. Please tell me at any point if you have questions about my research.

If you want to be in my research and talk with me about your character strengths and choreography, sign your name below and write today's date next to it. Thanks!

Student   Date

Researcher   Date

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Students' Character Strength Pre- and Post-Survey

Code number_____

Please rate yourself according to the following statements.

1-strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3-I don't know, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree

1.) I work well as a member of a group.   _____

2.) The success of the group is just as important

   as my own success.   _____

3.) I complete what I start even if it is hard.   _____

4.) I never give up.   _____

5.) I can understand other people's points of view.   _____

6.) I care about how other people are feeling.   _____

7.) My belief in myself gets me through hard times. _____

8.) I expect the best from my future and work to achieve it. _____

9.) It is important to listen to the ideas and opinions of others. _____

10.) I notice my own thoughts and feelings.   _____

11.) I can control my emotions and behaviors.   _____

12.) I know that my actions now will impact

   myself and others.   _____

Student Exit Interview

Code number_____

1.) What have you learned about yourself during this unit?

2.) Which character strengths do you think you have further developed as a result of the creative work you have done in this class? Do you believe you have learned more about teamwork, perseverance, social intelligence, hope, self-control or perspective? Please explain the reasons for your answer.

3.) Do you know more about the character strengths of your classmates after this class? If so, what have you learned? Which of the six character strengths were involved in what you learned about your classmate or classmates?

4.) How can you use the character strengths of perseverance, social intelligence, hope/optimism, self-control, teamwork, and perspective in this unit outside of dance class?

5.) Please describe a specific example in which a part of this dance class taught you about one or more of the character strengths. For example, did any of the ideas or inspirations for creating movements and making dances connect more easily or more readily with specific character strengths.

APPENDIX C

LESSON PLANS

Lesson Focus	Activities

Teamwork	1. Discussion on Teamwork
	2. Quotes
	3. *Wisdom of Geese video
	4. Choreography: Create a dance that teaches the audience about the importance of teamwork
	   • Use 2 or more elements of dance
	   • Include a beginning and ending pose
	   • 1st 8 counts in unison
	   • 16 counts showing a conflict or problem in the group
	   • Last 8 counts in unison
	   Each person must contribute at least one idea
	5. Performances

Perseverance	1. Quotes
	2. Misty Copeland Perseverance video
	3. *For Every Hill I've had to Climb Poem
	
	4. Choreography: You will need a pen or pencil and paper.
	   • Fill in the blanks for the following writing prompt.
	   • Choose and circle at least 4 words that inspire actions.
	   • Create a dance based on those words.
	   • Each action needs to last for at least 4 counts.
	   • Your dance will be a minimum of 16 counts.
	5. Performances

Hope/Optimism	- Quotes "Everything is possible" discussion *Visual art – painting of people walking out of darness into a keyhole of light - Choreography: Your task is to create a dance using accumulation based on the painting. Somehow showing the idea of coming out of darkness and moving toward a bright future. - How can you show the character strength of optimism in that way? - A-Darkness - A-Darkness B-a little brighter - A-Darkness B- a little brighter C-coming into the light/positive - A - Darkness B - a little brighter C-coming into the light D-bright future/positivity - Performances

Self-Control	1. Quotes
	2. Discussion
	3. *The Marshmallow Experiment video (children in the video exhibit a reward for using their character strength of self control. Research shows that these same who have strong self control are more successful later in life.
	4. Choreography: Your task will be to create a dance that depicts the idea of wanting something but using self-control to hold out for a greater reward. You will use an ABC choreographic form
	• Please begin and end in stillness
	• Your A phrase should show the feeling of wanting something (decide what that thing could be)
	• Your B phrase should show waiting and using self-control
	• Your C phrase should show how you are rewarded
	• Each phrase should be at least 8 counts
	• Include at least 3 elements of dance
	5. Performances

Perspective	1. Quotes 2. Optical Illusions video and discussion 3. *Perspective cartoon image of two men looking at a number. One is standing on each side. One man is convinced the number is a 9 while the other believes it to be the number 6. Both men are correct. 4. Choreography: Create a dance using theme and variation. Students will have 15 minutes to choreograph a 16-count movement sequence (phrase A). They will perform the sequence in the following format: beginning pose, A1, A2, A3, A4, ending pose. • perform phrase A facing the front (A1) • perform it facing the left side (A2) • perform it facing the back (A3) • perform it facing the right side (A4) • Be sure to begin and end in a pose • Include at least 3 elements of dance The audience will see your sequence from different perspectives. 5. Performances

Social Intelligence	- Quotes - Discussion on empathy - List as many emotions as possible *Clip from Inside Out - Virtually Collaborative Choreography: Their last move is your first move. - Choose one of the feelings we discussed. - Create a 4 count movement to show that feeling. - I will share my 4 counts first, the next person will try my 4 counts before sharing their 4 counts. - This will continue in a chain until everyone has both tried another feeling and shared theirs. - Group Performance.