

Effects of Theater-Based Pedagogy on  
Adolescents' Sense of Hope and Social Emotional Development

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### **Abstract**

This study assessed the effects of theater-based teaching methods on levels of hope and other positive social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes in adolescent students following participation in an arts-based camp using theater and photography approaches. Participants reported a heightened sense of hope on the “agency” (goal-directed determination) and “pathways” (planning of ways to meet goals) subscales of Snyder’s Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) after a week of collaboration and interdependent play-building. In addition, the study explored youth’s expressions of connection, engagement, and resilience through qualitative methods. In pre- and post-camp focus groups, participants shared feelings of worry and fear over world and political problems at the outset and of belonging and empowerment at the end.

*Keywords:* devised theater, participatory action research, photovoice, hope scale

Previous research has shown that theater-based programming can enhance youth engagement and resilience (Gallagher, Starkman, & Rhoades, 2017; Bhukanwala, 2014). This study sought to extend these findings by evaluating the impact of a one-week theater-based pedagogical intervention on adolescents' sense of hope and other positive social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes. For adolescents, a sense of hope is related to protective factors such as positive and engaging experiences that increase self-efficacy and a positive identity (Resnick, 2000). Evidence also supports the importance of centering youth voices and developing empathy for all students (Debnam, Johnson, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw, 2014). Opportunities to engage in play, exploration, collaboration, and the experience of building a theatrical program from the collective creativity of a group, can enhance levels of confidence and improve other social and emotional skills including empathy and engagement (Troxel & Kandel-Cisco, 2015). There is a shortage of research in this area. While theater practitioners have recognized the value of creative processes to facilitating healing, growth, empathy, and hope, among other inter- and intra-personal benefits, theater work in the context of educational pedagogy aimed at social emotional change is relatively underexplored (Perry, 2011).

Therefore, beyond a desire to use theater in classrooms and community settings to promote and sustain individualized learning outcomes, this study assessed the impact of theater-based pedagogies that create opportunities for building hope as well as shared social and emotional engagement with adolescents. Like many adolescents at this critical age, students in the study expressed feelings of marginalization by socio-political factors such as race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, ability, and gender identity (Fine & Ruglis, 2009). In this regard, the intervention used theater and photography, writing, and group improvisations to elicit feelings of

connection, with activities chosen to support problem-solving and group collaboration to enhance understanding and acceptance of differences (Goodwin & Deady, 2013).

The intervention design drew on Freire's (1972) critical educational philosophy. Theater has been identified as a culturally responsive tool drawing on Freire's critical yet hopeful educational pedagogy, which has been adapted as theater-based pedagogy by Boal (1979). Examining education for critical consciousness, Freire's ideas and Boal's theater application of them emphasize students as partners in their own empowerment. The study sought to correlate exposure to theater-based pedagogy with an enhanced level of hope and positive social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes. If higher levels of hope represent a perceived ability to achieve goals or a motivation to follow chosen routes to meet those goals, this should be reflected in the data created by the students in their work throughout the week-long out-of-school camp. The study's participatory action research design reflects the position that change is possible through collaborative constructivist research grounded in the lived experiences of the participants themselves (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The collaboration between the researcher and student participants emphasized student participation and an approach of "researching-with" rather than "researching-for" that shaped the project's participatory action methodology (Fine & Ruglis, 2009; Freire, 1970).

### **Hope and Social Emotional Development**

Snyder's (2000) theory of hope subdivides hope into four categories: (a) *goals thoughts* that provide direction and an endpoint for hopeful thinking; (b) *pathway thoughts*, which refer to the routes we take to achieve our desired goals and our perceived ability to produce these routes; (c) *agency thoughts*, which refers to the motivation we have to undertake the routes toward our goals; and (d) *barrier thoughts*, which block the attainment of our goals and cause us to either

give up or use pathway thoughts to create new routes to them. In many cases, goal attainment has been found to be associated with positive emotions whereas goal blockages are related to negative emotions (Diener, 1984). Snyder (2000) has demonstrated that high hope is associated with a number of beneficial outcomes including higher academic achievement and lower levels of depression. Meanwhile, lower hope is associated with negative outcomes such as a reduction in well-being (Diener, 1984). Other researchers have explored hope and offered additional positive correlates of hope, including improved outcomes in athletic performance, physical health, and psychological adjustment (Cheavens, Michael, & Snyder, 2005).

Jevne and Williams (1998) interpret the phenomenon of hope as being "intimately interwoven and embedded in our dreams [aspirations]" (p. 2). They propose that when dreams are lost, hope rests in the possibilities for new or modified dreams. They take this idea even further to describe hope as a choice, and that living in hope means choosing to act on those hopes as "hope is not about everything turning out alright. It is about life being alright, no matter how things turn out" (p. 164). The authors suggest that contrary to the society-promoted need to look out for "number one," human beings thrive on significant connections with others, described as our ability to have community with others. Those who have emotional bonds with others build resiliency through these connections and are more likely to choose to respond to this spirit in choosing hope. Thus hope, spirit, and resiliency cannot be separated from one another.

Positive social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes are beginning to appear in theater-based research studies in settings outside of traditional theatrical spaces. These studies reside under the term applied theater (Prentki & Preston, 2013) an umbrella term which includes various types of theater projects (including community and social action activities) and often in service to exploring participants' experience of inequality and disempowerment (Boal, 1979).

For instance, newer work includes Anderson's (2014) demonstration that drama education and applied theater help individuals process and produce meaning, "allowing [them] to respond to ambiguity, conflict, indifference and complexity" (p. 114). Nelson (2019) has created a theater group in Boston comprised of urban youth. Her work examines the relationship between the commitment these youth have to their group, EmersonTHEATER, and the development of loyalty and community created within the youth themselves. Gallagher and Rodricks (2017) offer an exceptional study of theater as change maker. They show that re-enactment of negative life experiences is pivotal in empowering youth to "shift the landscape of traditional learning and explore avenues where different, relational, socially embedded, and more complex intersectional possibilities for 'having' a voice may exist" (p. 114). Similar in scope to the present intervention, these studies illustrate the reenactment and subsequent disruption of negative life experiences. While there is a growing body of theater-based research linking participation in theater activities to positive social emotional outcomes, parallel studies in education are lacking. This study is a start in filling this void. Its research question asked: Can theater-based methods enhance adolescents' sense of hope and social emotional learning?

### **Method**

**Participants and Setting.** The study included students with and without disabilities who attended a middle school or high school in a Midwestern university town. Reported challenges shared by parents, caregivers, and participants included ADHD, depression, and anxiety disorder. The group consisted of 11 students: 9 girls and 2 boys in grades 6 through 10. Two students identified as African American or mixed-race, one identified as LGBTQ, and two students disclosed mental health concerns. Two students also had a history of sexual abuse, one self-disclosed and one caregiver-disclosed. Participants were recruited in an all-inclusive manner,

welcoming all individuals regardless of race/ethnicity, social class, gender, or ability. This participant group was not representative of the surrounding midwestern population, but the researcher attempted to build a sample that would be representative of students possibly marginalized by trauma, ethnicity, income, disability, gender, or sexual orientation. Inclusion and diversity were cornerstones of this project, as students came from different backgrounds, with levels of experience in creative process work, and with varying levels of comfort in working within groups.

### **Procedures**

The researcher used *devised theatre* and *Photovoice* approaches to explore with students their expressions, feelings, and experiences of hope and aspects social emotional learning.

**Devised Theatre.** Creating theatrical material without a pre-written script is called devised theater. The process of devised theater is described as the development of unique material by an individual or group of theater artists, often in collaboration with other art modalities such as visual art, music, or dance (Oddey, 2013). In devised theater, actions are elicited by a story or an imagined situation, the scene, game, or play, and the characters involved are created by the group and enacted spontaneously. Usually, as in this study, a leader guides participants in rehearsing and performing enactments and reflecting upon issues presented therein (Siks, 1958). Devising a piece of theater can be a stimulating and journey toward a refined performance which is a fusion of the unique talents and creativity of the group. The work of devising theater is not prescribed or mapped out. Rather, it is a creative process in which we find “well-trodden paths, blind alleys and sudden surprises” (Graham & Hoggett, 2014).

The first step to devising together is playing together, to build trust and group cohesion. Activities designed to encourage play and collaboration were included in the researcher's daily agenda in the study. As all arts projects tend to evoke insights and revelations, changes to the daily plan were expected. An outline of daily activities was designed, and inspired changes to said outline were welcomed. There were daily rituals that the students embraced and engaged in. One of the favorite games played each day, involved participants passing an everyday object around in a circle and imagining it taking another form in each person's hands. These changes were then acted out in gesture. This acting game, often called "pass the prop" is a favorite in many settings (Fleming, 2017). It is an enjoyable "warm-up" game for all to play and is easily adaptable to participants of diverse skills and abilities.

Storytelling and sharing personal memories and experiences occurred in the circle each day as well. The researcher offered writing prompts such as "I cried and cried" or "the best day ever." Students would write for 10-20 minutes and then shared their text, if they chose to, in the circle. Group story-building is an exercise used often in devised theater work as it provides access to many possible scenarios. In this study, many story-building methods were used. In most cases, the researcher started with a prompt and sent the story around the circle, each student adding a sentence or two. Other versions used were adding to the story one sentence at a time, using each letter of the alphabet consecutively, or simply building a story one word at a time.

Stories were built collaboratively into short scenes by breaking the group into small teams. Short scene work involved crafting a dialogue or vignette around a certain theme, such as "saving the world." Themes were developed by asking students to call out ideas or inspirations such as "what is important?" Or "what do we need?" and working with their responses. Themes such as "saving the world" or "a day in the life" were used as inspiration for group sculptures,



then developed into short scenes. See Figure 1 as an example of group sculpture “saving the world.”

[Figure 1]

**Photovoice.** An adaptation of the research methodology Photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997) was incorporated into the study as a secondary source data. Photovoice incorporates capturing and sharing photographs of community objects in order to uncover themes. Students were asked to take pictures of “hope” using mobile phones and personal cameras in the surrounding neighborhood vicinity. They were instructed to photograph natural and physical objects and spaces, rather than people. They debriefed their photographs to the group and developed monologues from these debriefing sessions. Figure 2 shows a sampling of students’ photos and corresponding monologues. The purpose of embedding photography into the project was to incorporate multi-faceted artifacts of the students’ exploration over the week into the final performance. Student photos and descriptions of them, written journal material, selected artwork, devised scenes, monologues, and group enactments, were all relevant material to be woven into the piece.

[Figure 2]

Over the course of the week, students created scenes, monologues, and vignettes, culminating in a public performance. Devised theater techniques, including acting games, writing prompts, drawing and collaging, writing scenes, creating sculptures and music, and writing monologues from student photos, were all used to build a culminating project to be shared with families and the public. The researcher kept field notes daily on everything that transpired and how students reacted to prompts and games.

**Design and data collection and analytic procedures.** The study employed a pre-test/post-test design (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2013), using both quantitative and qualitative measures administered before and following the intervention described above, without a control group, as well as qualitative measures applied during the intervention (field observations) and upon the student products produced within it (content analysis).

Methods for collecting data included administering the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) pre- and post-intervention and conducting pre- and post-intervention focus groups to assess change in students' self-reported levels of hope. The Hope Scale is a 6-item Likert scale measuring a respondent's level of hope. The scale is divided into two subscales that comprise two of the categories of Snyder's cognitive model of hope: (a) Agency (i.e., goal-directed energy) and, (b) Pathways (i.e., planning to accomplish goals). Of the 12 items, 4 make up the Agency subscale and 4 make up the Pathways subscale. The pre-intervention focus group included pre-determined topics such as resilience as well as emergent topics such as worry. The post-intervention focus group topics addressed those issues that were most reflective to students' sense of hope in the initial focus group. Both focus groups were video recorded for transcription purposes only. In each one, the researcher asked open ended questions and encouraged all students to speak freely. Finally, the initial focus group also served as a springboard that identified students' perspectives on the world and how they coped (e.g., ecological conditions, resilience practices), with a goal of devising creative strategies that would support the group during intervention.

In addition to the researcher's field observation notes, additional qualitative data were gathered through content analysis of students' artifacts, including all student photography

(whether it was used in the final project or not), writing, artwork, collective stories and scene work, and the devised script.

## **Results**

Students' initial feelings of worry and fear over world and political problems were counterbalanced by a heightened sense of hope, belonging, and empowerment at the end of the week. This was evident across all data sources, including the Hope Scale, focus groups, and analysis of artifacts.

***The Hope Scale.*** There was a significant difference in scores for the Agency subscale pre-test (M=11.6, SD=2.88) and post-test (M=12.56, SD=2.46) conditions,  $t(9)=2.24$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , as well as for the scores for the Pathways subscale pre-test (M=11.5, SD=2.22) and post-test (M=12.1, SD=2.18) conditions,  $t(9)=2.25$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . There also was a significant difference in scores for the Total scale pre-test (M=23.1, SD=4.86) and post-test (M=24.7, SD=4.35) conditions,  $t(9)=2.95$ ,  $p = 0.02$ . Moreover, in terms of effect size, findings indicate that the intervention increased group means for the two subscales by nearly three-quarters of a standard deviation ( $d=0.71$ ), a moderate effect size, and the total mean by nearly a full standard deviation ( $d=0.93$ ), a large effect size (see Figure 4).

[Figure 4]

***Focus Groups.*** The researcher noted students' increased openness to share their personal narratives as they became more comfortable from the beginning to the end of the week during the focus groups. The overarching goal over the week was devising creative strategies that would work best for the group in creating a culminating project. For example, the first focus group was a springboard for students to discuss perspectives of

the world and how they coped (ecological conditions and resilience practices). Students were asked open questions and encouraged to speak freely. The researcher guided the dialogue; however, students were free to change topics at any time. The initial conversation explored notions of hope.

RESEARCHER: What is hope?

ERIN: What Pandora left in the box.

RESEARCHER: Explain that.

ERIN: When Pandora opened the box, the Gods, as a little bit of a practical joke, left a little piece of hope, inside the box at the bottom of it. So, she opened — when she opened the box, most of those monsters got out, she shut it just in time for Hope not to get out(Erin).

Students connected their sense of hope (or lack thereof) with a collective sense of worry about the larger political landscape and its impact on their lives. They raised concerns about the recently-elected president and his stances, including defaming LGBTQ military members and racial epithets they heard from the media or from family members. Tara correlated a decline in hope to a general malaise explaining that “we have a bunch of world problems and if we actually start trying to fix those problems, then we’ll start having hope that they can be solved”. Connor described the current political atmosphere in our country as “stressful”. Tara explained that there was an unspoken acknowledgment that “kid problems” weren’t as important as larger issues. When asked if she was also “stressed out” she affirmed that “because you have your own little problems to take care of, which seem really big to you, but then you think of these world problems and they’re like - they’re horrible. And you’re like, ‘how are we going to take care of this?’ But we’re also trying to deal with our own lives”. Connor followed with the realization

that looking at the toxic climate in our country “makes your own problems look really like they don’t matter that much”.

As the group engaged in this first conversation, specific instances of injustice and injury were mentioned, including the President’s treatment of gays and transgender soldiers in the military. The researcher asked the students to articulate the connection between the President’s behavior and their own lower levels of hope. Their response was to attribute his stereotyping and belittling people of different races of beliefs to an inability for our country to solving any problems in the world as he is “tearing us apart” (Tara). In an effort to expand the breadth of the conversation into a focus on collaborating with the possibility of building hope, the researcher asked the students to delve into terms such as self-efficacy or believing in yourself and resilience. Students described resilience as “resistance” and “not giving up” and Olivia connected the presence of resilience to perseverance, where “if something starts to happen, while you’re working on something else, then to focus on both of them not ignore the other one, but to still keep your mind set on the first thing so you can keep it going and not give up on it”. When asked what the opposite of hope is, the students offered “just giving up” and connected that to fear, despair, and doubt. When this thread in the conversation turned to “belief” Lara defined it as “sort of something that you use whether it’s like a religious icon or otherwise it’s something that you use to sort of help yourself find more hope”. Finally, each student was asked what they were hopeful for in the moment, and Tara articulated her feelings as being “really pretty scared for like if this keeps going on we are all going to be in bad trouble like with the world and I’m not sure if it’s going to come around but I hope that it will ...and people will realize that what’s going on is really horrible and they’ll start making changes for the better”.

By the end of the week, students exhibited a vastly elevated sense of comfort with one another as well as a much more positive outlook. They focused their conversation on the freedom and fun they experienced over the intervention week; how they appreciated the opportunity to be creative in many forms; and how they hoped to work together again, indicating authentic, collaborative, and meaningful growth in hope.

In examining the data from focus groups to search for correlates of hope (e.g., empowerment, group cohesion), the researcher identified multiple themes related to these correlates. One key theme was empowerment related to the strength of the group itself. Connor articulated a sense of the joy found in the success experienced in working together to achieve a final project that all were proud of. Connor ended the final focus group with a plan in place to work together again, exclaiming, “I feel the hope!” and “Let’s do this again!”

Experiencing a sense of group cohesion in solving problems emerged as an important theme. Initial feelings of worry and concern over the world landscape which were highly prevalent in the first focus group. were not brought forth again in the post-intervention focus group. In fact, one of the students joked sarcastically with the researcher, “Donald Trump? I kind of forgot about him ... thanks for reminding me.”

One theme repeated multiple times over the week, in conversations (field notes) and in the final focus group, was a sense of being empowered by the creative process itself. One student explained that, although the work was collaborative and therefore at first challenging, she grew in awareness of her own enjoyment of the process.

At first it was really weird because, like on the first day we didn’t know each other very well and it was just like, “Oh, I have to talk about these deep personal

feelings about how I view the world” in front of people I don’t know. But by the second day even, it was, “Oh, this is cool, let’s just divulge my personal feelings, this is fine,” and it was, it worked really well to be honest. I like it (Celine).

**Photovoice.** Students shared expressions of hope and growth in social emotional learning in writing about their photos. For example, Evie created a powerful monologue about her photo of cracks in the sidewalk, sharing that “the grass growing through the cracks represents how if you are resilient, you can fix your problems, and push through and continue to thrive” (Evie) (see Figure 2 for selected photos and corresponding monologues).

**Additional Artifacts.** The design also included recorded field observations of student interactions during the intervention and artifact analysis of student products produced within it (see Appendix C for an excerpt from field notes). The devised script served as an encapsulation of the key themes that emerged over the week (see Devised Script, Appendix A). Across the data, students shared a common sense of worry and fear at the outset of camp and over the week a sense of connection to one another and a heightened level of hope in an empowering and creative environment. A summary of selected emergent themes includes a sense of freedom to be themselves, an experience of hope after loss, and excitement about the opportunity to be creative and rewarded for sharing and leading. Also relevant were expressed feelings of belonging to a new group when not all knew one another or went to the same schools and a resulting lessening of the stress each may feel independently, as the group provided support.

*Freedom to be themselves.* At the beginning of the week one student admitted that he felt alone as he didn’t know the rest of the group. This student, EJ wrote one of the most powerful scenes in the project, in which a student in school is taunted by peers and a teacher for not knowing what the instructions were in a classroom assignment. He stands alone at the front of

the stage and speaks directly to the audience. This was the first moment in the piece where we broke the 4<sup>th</sup> Wall – the theatrical construct that there is a separation between audience and actors. EJ says directly to the audience “don’t leave anyone CLUELESS.” This moment in the devised piece resonates as a turning point where the student/actors launched into a purely vulnerable emotional space, working together, without explicit direction to say certain lines, and devised the following (Script excerpt, Appendix A):

EJ: Don’t ever leave anyone clueless.

CORY: Anxious.

CONNOR: Distracted.

WENDY: Hopeless.

EVIE: Hope is not something you have, it’s something you find.

CONNOR: You can’t find it alone.

LARA: Hope is resistance.

*Experience of hope and hopelessness.* Writing and sharing occurred throughout the week as researcher and students built the culminating project. As stated in examination of the first focus group, there was an initial sense that students’ problems were insignificant and unheard by the adult world. Personal losses were explored through journaling and circle time where students were invited, (but never required,) to share (see Figure 1 for samples of student-created mixed media art and photography about hope). Tara shared her thoughts on feeling hopeless and trying to pull through.

One moment I’m just thinking about that now, and like, you have to keep going in life just like that show and that’s basically hope. Like, maybe you don’t believe that, maybe you don’t want to keep going, but you have to, you’re forced to keep



going, the show must go on. Um so, you are kind of forced to keep a positive attitude and make it through things. (Tara).

*Opportunity to be creative and rewarded for sharing and leading.* Participants discussed their overall perceptions about the camp experience in the final focus group. The researcher was interested in learning about their feelings about the collaborative work done over the week and their assessment of the final performance. They shared a sense of relief that the week had culminated in a successful event, which they actually enjoyed creating together.

RESEARCHER: So, how does a camp like this work?

CELINE: Because it just happens, ok we are just going to do this now, this sounds fun, and then you're just like, you actually get into it, and you kind of start putting effort into things that you didn't think you were going to put effort in to. And you start having a lot of fun without realizing it and you're just like "omg let's just do this all the time, omg".

A few of the participants had prior experience working in and around the arts, either in theater, music, or visual arts activities. A couple shared that they had not. One of the most relevant recurring themes was the realization that "the fun" came from doing the work of creative expression – writing, drawing, photography, and then sharing that effort with others. The work created in this project, built by creative collaboration, was a transformative experience for the students. This becomes clear in examining the shift in priority seen from the pre- to post-focus groups. These students started as a group of strangers (they did not know one another and were from different grades and schools) and ended as a strong artistic team, collaborating and rehearsing together, making adjustments, supporting one another, and performing together in

front of families and the public. This cohesion and confidence is reflected in the devised script (Appendix A).

### **Discussion**

Overall, students expressed a heightened sense of social engagement, emotional resilience, and personal and communal hope after a week of collaboration and interdependent play-building. In pre-camp focus group interviews, student participants initially shared feelings of worry and fear specifically over problems related to the recent election of Donald Trump in 2016. One key component of this revelation was the students mentioning having their own personal problems yet feeling like their youthful concerns were not as important as the worrisome state of our country and world. They conveyed a sense of isolation and helplessness as “kids” who couldn’t control any of these issues, and, as we worked throughout the week, often alluded to these world concerns. To this end, many of the students’ scenes and vignettes explored themes such as saving the world, helping one another feel connected, and becoming resilient. By the end of the week, all students conveyed a heightened sense of self-efficacy and creative empowerment, and conversation in the post-intervention focus group turned to excitement about the project they had created together and how they wanted to remain close as they all went back to school in different grades and separate neighborhoods. One of the older girls expressed appreciation for being encouraged to make art and explore her own world over the week.

The study aligns with other demonstrations of practice incorporating theater and creative work into various settings (Anderson et al., 2019). Newer studies including those shared here (Anderson, 2014; Nelson, 2019; Gallagher & Rodricks, 2017) all, like the current study, include shared principles such as learner-centered instruction through drama-based activities. These

studies enable researchers and practitioners to collaboratively focus on unique contributions of the dramatic learning context on individual students' social-emotional and behavioral developmental outcomes.

This study featured the use of supportive experiences based in drama involving perspective-building and empathy to support adolescents in understanding and accepting differences (Goodwin & Deady, 2013). The students intervention were among many adolescents at this critical age who have reported feelings of marginalization by race/ethnicity, social class, ability, and gender identity (Fine & Ruglis, 2009). Practitioner evidence supports the significance of opportunities for adolescent student expression in efforts to promote social emotional skills such as resilience, engagement, and empathy (Debnam, Johnson, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw, 2014), upon which the present intervention was designed.

While this study's findings support the use of theater as a tool to increase feelings of hope and engage students' sense of social connection and emotional resilience, it has limitations. Replication with more participants in different contexts is needed. Assessment of indications of hope and social emotional development need to be carried out with significant others in students' lives, parents and teachers, for instance.

As these students faced uncertain futures across multiple domains—personal, financial, political, cultural—the intervention offered them a positive and constructive means of expression in the form of collaboration and performance that enhanced their sense of hope and level of social and emotional engagement, both inter-and intra-personally. Moreover, if teachers can help their students learn to create work collaboratively that unpacks the polarities in their lived experience—despair and hope, defeat and resilience, marginalization and connection)—while also imagining new narratives, classroom (and world) landscapes might change, dramatically.

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### Tables and Figures

Figure 1

*Group Sculpture Saving the World*



Figure 2

*Photos and Monologues*



“The cracks in the sidewalk represent the loss of hope and resilience. It first represents how a person may seem tough and unbreakable but may be more fragile than they appear. The cracks in the sidewalk could have been caused by a random event, such as a car crash, or something as simple as a brick falling and hitting the ground too hard. This relates to how a wide array of events can cause a person to give up hope and crack. However, the grass growing through the cracks represents how if you are resilient, you can fix your problems, and push through and continue to thrive”. (Evie).



“This picture is hopeful because it shows the future that I’m fighting for. OBVIOUSLY. (points to the rainbows she drew on her arms) In the picture, there’s an American flag alongside a gay pride flag, and I took it because it shows that these 2 groups go hand in hand. There are queer Americans and there are Americans that support queer rights, and whichever category the owner



of the pride flag falls into doesn't matter. We don't know if the two flag owners were trying to contradict each other, maybe the American flag belongs to somebody who is against queer rights, but in putting both the flags up it gives me hope that people will realize that these groups aren't as different as people think". (Lara)

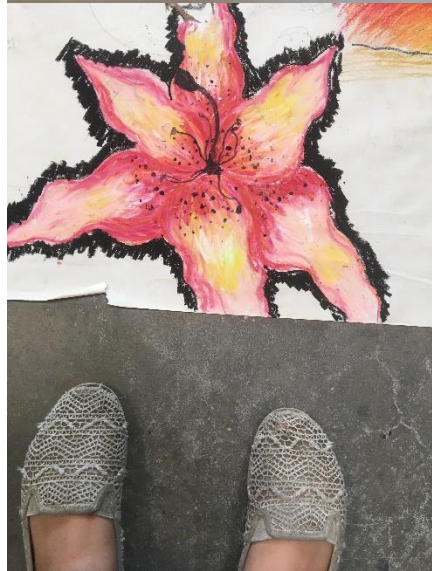
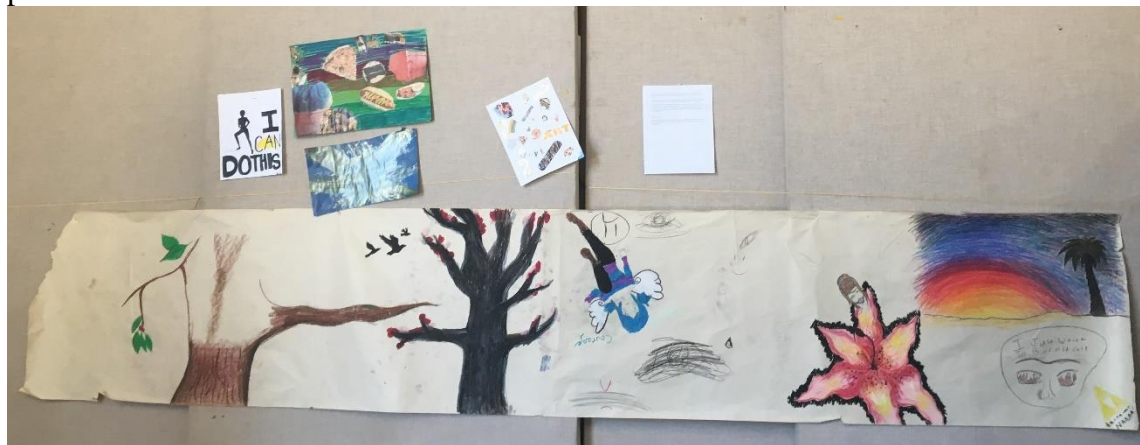


"This picture is one I took, because in my life, things have usually been out of my control. I am small. This signifies that in many ways I am similar to a creature of the ground. Anyone could step on me at any time and destroy my life. The flower is what I could be, I could be graceful and elegant and whole. But no matter who I am or what I've become, I will always be a creature of the ground. Things will always be out of my control. The trees are, the trees above me are my family and friends. They are the ones who have helped me become this flower. The roof is my mother, who shielded my brother and I through the harsh tongue of my father. Although not seen, my roots are in the soil. The soil is my fire, my roots are my soul. My roots keep me grounded. I am both flowers. The flower on the right is the public persona. The show that I put on to convince others and myself that I am different than my home life and my experiences. The left flower is the truth of myself. I am, I am pale and I am broken. I am utterly drained, although I am still beautiful, and I am a shadow of the facade. I have flaws. This is the girl who has cried herself to sleep because of the pain in her arms, thighs and heart. This is a girl who is healing. I am both. I am an image of both hope and faith in myself, and I'm broken, in the morning. You cannot have one without the other. Hope and pain go hand in hand". (Celine).



Figure 3

*Samples of Student Artwork and Photography*



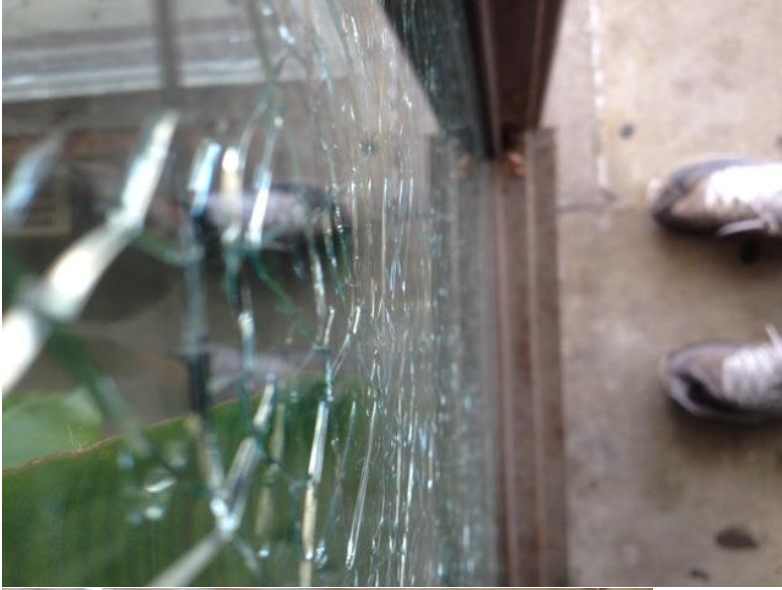
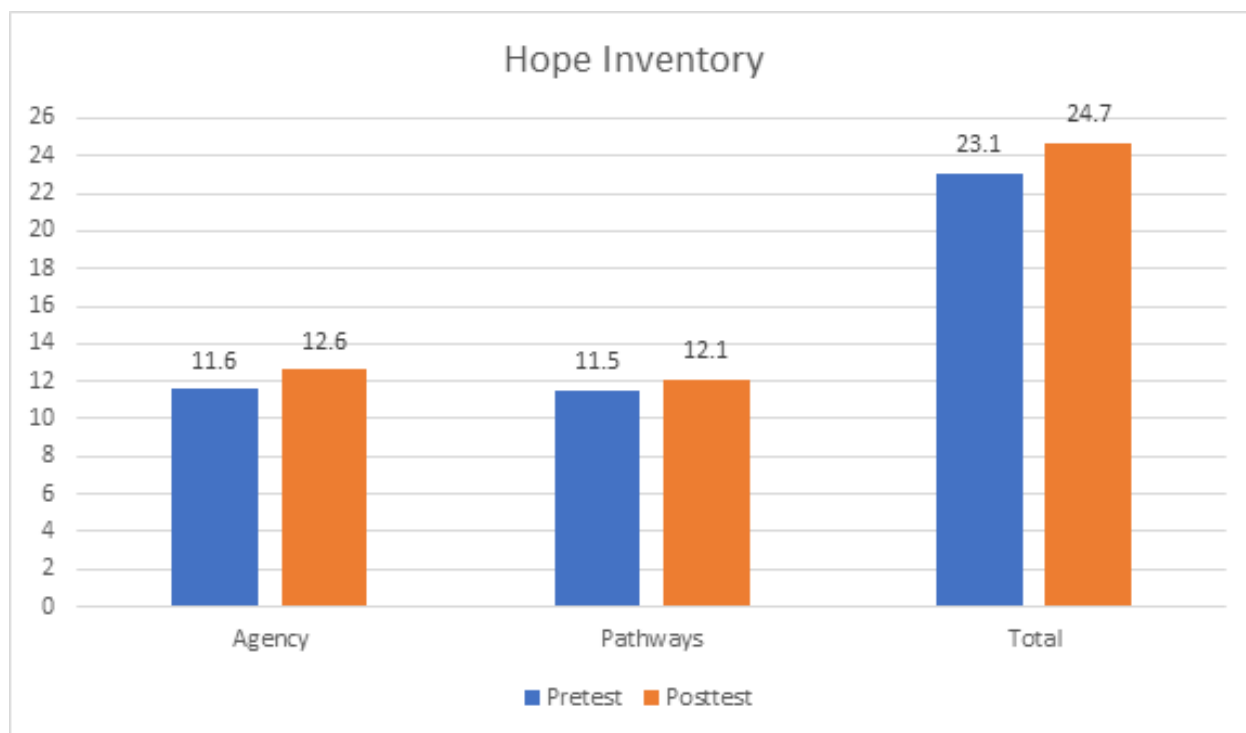






Figure 4

*Pre- to Post-Test Gains in Agency, Pathways, and Total Hope Scale Scores*



Agency:  $t(9)=2.24$ ,  $p < 0.05$  (Cohen's  $d = 0.71$ )

Pathways:  $t(9)=2.25$ ,  $p < 0.05$  (Cohen's  $d = 0.71$ )

Total:  $t(9)=2.95$ ,  $p = 0.02$  (Cohen's  $d = 0.93$ )

Table 1

*Selected Daily Activities*

<b>Day</b>	<b>Activities</b>
1 Monday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Focus Group 1</li> <li>• Snyder's Hope Scale administered (Snyder et al, 1991)</li> <li>• Ice breakers: (The Winds are Blowing, Build a Story, Move, Freeze, Melt, What'cha Doin?, Pass the Prop)</li> <li>• Hope collages, painting and drawing</li> <li>• Write a note to yourself in 10 years</li> <li>• Planning for the week</li> </ul>
2 Tuesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ice breakers: (The Winds are Blowing, Build a Story, Move, Freeze, Melt, What'cha Doin?; Pass the Prop)</li> <li>• Journaling: "one day I cried and cried"; "the best day ever..."; sharing circle</li> <li>• Photovoice activity: taking pictures, debriefing, writing about key photos</li> <li>• In between activities: collages, drawing, group mural</li> </ul>
3 Wednesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warm up games: Pass the Prop, Freeze! Build a story</li> <li>• Continued work on monologues from photos</li> <li>• Group Sculpture Themes: You got this!; Useless; Burning Down the World</li> <li>• Scene work on those themes: writing, rehearsing, performing</li> <li>• Discussion on performance order and shape</li> </ul>
4 Thursday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warm up games: Pass the Prop, Freeze! Build a story</li> <li>• Work through performance, scenes, connecting lines, "hope is"; photos and monologues, group sculptures and movement, closing monologue and music</li> </ul>
5 Friday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warm up games: (The Winds are Blowing, Build a Story, Move, Freeze, Melt, What'cha Doin?; Pass the Prop)</li> <li>• Focus Group 2</li> <li>• Snyder's Hope Scale administered (Snyder et al, 1991)</li> <li>• Dress Rehearsal</li> <li>• Performance for friends and family</li> </ul>

## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### *Devised Script*

#### *BURNING DOWN THE WORLD*

TARA: Ok, everybody, welcome to angsty teens anonymous, this is our first meeting, um, so, here's what we're gonna do.

ERIN: Why am I here? Oh my god!

TARA: See how you're screaming? You need to vent.

ERIN: Vent this. (throws a notebook at her)

TARA: Ok. Also, probably because your parents signed you up. Um, anyway so here's what we're gonna do we're gonna go around in a circle, and we're going to say why we're all angsty and mad. You go first. (points at Connor)

CONNOR: I just hate it, when my mom puts the peanut butter on the wrong side of my PB&J. I mean, it's not called jelly butter and peanut, it's peanut butter and jelly.

TARA: I know, I've been there. Ok, now you go. (points at red jacket girl)

ERIN: I just hate it when my cats eat my socks. Sure, they're soft and they're fluffy and they smell like hamburgers, but that doesn't mean you can eat them. Is there like, food in them or something? Oh my god!

TARA: I know, right? That happens to me so often.

CONNOR: Same thing happened with my goldfish.

TARA: Ok, so, now you go. (points at OLIVIA)

OLIVIA: Are any of you actually thinking about the political situation of our country?

Everyone but OLIVIA: No.

TARA: No, not really. But you know what, whatever you say, uh, you can say it. It's fine, this is a safe space. There will be no judging.

OLIVIA: Alright, well, all the discrimination and hate going on, just, sometimes I feel like I wanna burn down the world.

ERIN: Woah, Ms. Arsonist.

TARA: (long Ok).

*YOU GOT THIS*

EVIE: Alright girl you got this! There's no way he's gonna say no.

CONNOR: ...but what if he does?

EVIE: C'mon, you've been crushing on this dude for like 6 months, man up already.

CONNOR: You know I'm not good at this type of thing.

EVIE: Let's be real, what's the worst that could happen?

CONNOR: Total humiliation?

EVIE: That aside, you only live once! You can do this! Go for it!

CONNOR: Alright.

WENDY: For the last time, Tennant is the best doctor.

TARA: Are you kidding? Matt Smith is the best doctor.

CONNOR: Hey Jerrod.

TARA (as a boy): Hi.

CONNOR: I was wondering if you wanted to go out sometime.

TARA: Yeah sure.

CONNOR: Alright bye. I can do this!

LOST

WENDY: Lost.

CORY (as teacher): Alright, now that you've heard all about your assignment, you have a little bit of time to write.



EJ (student): Oh, um, uhhhh, sorry I was spacing out, um during the explanation, can you uh, can you explain again?

CORY: If you weren't paying attention, you'll have to ask someone who was.

EJ: Um, uh I was spacing out, can you explain the assignment for me?

CORY: Guys?

(students whisper to each other, making fun of EJ)

CORY: Time's up.

(more whispering)

CORY: Great work. Good job. (to black shirt girl and grey pattern shirt girl)

*TRANSITION*

EJ: Don't ever leave anyone clueless.

CORY: Anxious.

CONNOR: Distracted.

WENDY: Hopeless.

EVIE: Hope is not something you have, it's something you find.

CONNOR: You can't find it alone.

LARA: Hope is resistance.

MIRA: Make art!

TARA: Make music.

ERIN: Love your friends.

CELINE: Hope. Hope is a nice warm feeling inside that gives you energy to go on. Hope is something you go to when you're unhappy, and I think we need hope to help us through the time of need. And help me to feel better even though it might not be better.

CONNOR: This picture resembles hope, because it looks like the light is pushing out the darkness. I took this because I thought it looked cool, and I thought it might represent

hope in a nice way. This photo was taken outside of the Lawrence Public Library. The shadow in this photo represents the darkness and evil in this world, and the light represents all the good things like happiness, and hope, in the world. This picture also represents that sad memories can be forgotten. The happy memories will stay forever.

LARA: This picture is hopeful because it shows the future that I'm fighting for.

OBVIOUSLY. (points to the rainbows she drew on her arms) In the picture, there's an American flag alongside a gay pride flag, and I took it because it shows that these 2 groups go hand in hand. There are queer Americans and there are Americans that support queer rights, and whichever category the owner of the pride flag falls into doesn't matter. We don't know if the two flag owners were trying to contradict each other, maybe the American flag belongs to somebody who is against queer rights, but in putting both the flags up it gives me hope that people will realize that these groups aren't as different as people think.

ERIN: I think this picture is very interesting. It makes me think of a free spirited person, just having her feet dangle in the wind. (inaudible, sounds like "the current") of the breeze controlling them, I feel calm just looking at it. I can just feel the breeze. (inaudible, sounds like "footloose" or "floating") spirit, lost in the wind, no way back, into the wind.

TARA: Ok, so, this is a story, it's mostly made up, but, ok. Once I was visiting my cousins and uncles in New Jersey. I asked my cousin what we should do while I was here, and she said, "there's a nice museum near and it's having a photography show right now." I've always been a photographer at heart, and so I exclaimed "alright, let's go!" We arrived at the museum, and I gasped. This person was an amazing photographer. I looked around, marveling at the pictures, and I looked up, expecting to see a gorgeous chandelier. Instead, I saw the most beautiful picture I've ever seen. It was perfect. The person had beautifully focused on the bark of the tree, and the camera was tilted to give an amazing angle. Best of all, there was a muted green sprout growing out of the tree, and under it was a leaf. It was the most gorgeous green you could imagine with a perfect curl at the end. It was amazing that nature could create such beautiful things.

EJ: Out of all the pictures that I took, I chose the one of me holding a rotting leaf, because, well at first I thought it just looked pretty, and nothing else. The more I look at it, the more I feel like there's a meaning to it. Like, something along the lines of the leaf representing hope, and the holes and rotting representing how people try to take it away from us.

EVIE: The cracks in the sidewalk represent the loss of hope and resilience. It first represents how a person may seem tough and unbreakable but may be more fragile than they appear. The cracks in the sidewalk could have been caused by a random event, such as a car crash, or something as simple as a brick falling and hitting the ground too hard. This relates to how a wide array of events can cause a person to give up hope and crack.

However, the grass growing through the cracks represents how if you are resilient, you can fix your problems, and push through and continue to thrive.

CORY: Under the bricks of every street is an undisturbed world full of diversity. This photo is a glimpse into the life of an insect, where every plant is like a tree

WENDY: The flower could be dead (inaudible, sounds like “underneath”), but it refuses to stop blooming. It presents it’s colors to the world regardless of it’s virility. It is the only flower that decided to bloom. It is the bravest flower.

CELINE: This picture is one I took, because in my life, things have usually been out of my control. I am small. This signifies that in many ways I am similar to a creature of the ground. Anyone could step on me at any time and destroy my life. The flower is what I could be, I could be graceful and elegant and whole. But no matter who I am or what I’ve become, I will always be a creature of the ground. Things will always be out of my control. The trees are, the trees above me are my family and friends. They are the ones who have helped me become this flower. The roof is my mother, who shielded my brother and I through the harsh tongue of my father. Although not seen, my roots are in the soil. The soil is my fire, my roots are my soul. My roots keep me grounded. I am both flowers. The flower on the right is the public persona. The show that I put on to convince others and myself that I am different than my home life and my experiences. The left flower is the truth of myself. I am, I am pale and I am broken. I am utterly drained, although I am still beautiful, and I am a shadow of the facade. I have flaws. This is the girl who has cried herself to sleep because of the pain in her arms, thighs and heart. This is a girl who is healing. I am both. I am an image of both hope and faith in myself, and I’m broken, in the morning. You cannot have one without the other. Hope and pain go hand in hand.

CORY: My roots keep me grounded, I am still beautiful.

TARA: I still have flaws.

CONNOR: Hope is the light in a sea of darkness.

ERIN: Hope is a thing you have.

LARA: Hope and pain go hand in hand.

(All start singing “Hand in Hand” song)

OLIVIA: Behind all people, there is peace, hope, and depth. Sometimes people have trouble with showing their true selves. There is no other, there is always another layer behind the skin. My picture represents all the colors behind a person on the outside. They may seem dull but never assume anything. I never get to know someone, before already putting them into a label. Our world right now is so preoccupied with our wars and stereotypes and doesn’t see how people around us are different. Our country needs to

open up a lot and see the bigger picture. We are not all the same, we will not all become the same, and we will not stand behind and watch the world incinerate because of our so-called leader. We are so beautiful and strong. We are what makes this world so unique. You are so gorgeous, and it's about time you love yourself. 'Cause if you love yourself, then nothing else matters.

LARA: We can do this.

(Hand in Hand song starts up again), students enter audience to hold hands and sing.

## Appendix B

### *Snyder Hope Scale Survey*

Snyder, C. R., Harris, C., Anderson, J. R., Holleran, S. A., Irving, L. M., Sigmon, S. T., . . . Harney, P. (1991). The will and the ways: development and validation of an individual-differences measure of hope. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60(4), 570.

*“Defining hope as a cognitive set comprising agency (belief in one’s capacity to initiate and sustain actions) and pathways (belief in one’s capacity to generate routes) to reach goals, the Hope Scale was developed and validated previously as a dispositional self-report measure of hope (Snyder et al., 1991). The present four studies were designed to develop and validate a measure of state hope. The six-item State Hope Scale is internally consistent and reflects the theorized agency and pathways components. The relationships of the State Hope Scale to other measures demonstrate concurrent and discriminant validity; moreover, the scale is responsive to events in the lives of people as evidenced by data gathered through both correlational and causal designs. The State Hope Scale offers a brief, internally consistent, and valid self-report measure of ongoing goal-directed thinking that may be useful to researchers and applied professionals”.* (Snyder et al, *State Hope Scale*, 1991, p. 1).

Hope Scale Survey for Participants

Likert Scale 1 – 5

1. think I am doing pretty well.

None of the time

A little of the time

Some of the time

A lot of the time

Most of the time

All of the time

2. I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me.

- None of the time
- A little of the time
- Some of the time
- A lot of the time
- Most of the time
- All of the time

3. I am doing just as well as other kids my age.

- None of the time
- A little of the time
- Some of the time
- A lot of the time
- Most of the time
- All of the time

4. When I have a problem, I can come up with lots of ways to solve it.

- None of the time
- A little of the time
- Some of the time
- A lot of the time
- Most of the time
- All of the time

5. I think the things I have done in the past will help me in the future.

- None of the time
- A little of the time
- Some of the time
- A lot of the time
- Most of the time
- All of the time

6. Even when others want to quit, I know that I can find ways to solve the problem.

- None of the time
- A little of the time
- Some of the time
- A lot of the time
- Most of the time
- All of the time

Notes: When administered to children, this scale is not labeled "The Children's Hope Scale," but is called "Questions About Your Goals." The total Children's Hope Scale score is achieved by adding the responses to the six items, with "None of the time" = 1; "A little of the time" = 2; "Some of the time" = 3; "A lot of the time" = 4; "Most of the time" = 5; and, "All of the time" = 6.

**Focus Group Questions conducted after pre and post survey, above**

1. Let's talk about Hope in your life
2. Resilience
3. Let's talk about Creativity
4. Is there a connection between creativity and hope?
5. Let's talk about photography
6. Let's talk about theatre
7. Why is it important to share creative work?

**Appendix C**  
*Sample Researcher Field Notes*

Day 2. Writing prompts. The time I cried and cried and the time that I was most happy. Students share a lot about more personal moments. They fear meanness, cruelty, helplessness, losing respect, lack of respect, lost loss of an animal, friend, or loved one, loss of control, lack of control, PTSD, triggering abandonment, self-image, issues with parents, issues with growing up and 'shit happens' moments when we have no control and we just have to ride with it. Second-guessing ourselves. There is the story for everyone where we have lack of hope or despair and then we start to put pieces in place and wait search for hope and we try to find resilience we have obstacles in our way and we have endings (either happy or sad) but maybe we are stronger. We start to talk about visualizing these pieces of our lives in these moments of hope or despair and how we could visualize objects and things and how we will take pictures to represent hope and change and resilience and creative self-efficacy. Things that come up in this writing: no one liked me; I was a tiny speck; I had an existential crisis; I needed to make a change; I wanted to kill myself; I was in therapy I needed to change places I needed a new beginning. Students are really brave and vulnerable and careful with one another. We talked about our safe space and how we are working together to possibly help other kids in the future through this creative process to work through some of their stories -- the happy stories: the sleep over; the junk food; the thrilling liberating moments of childhood: swimming, looking at stars and skies, being outside; being in the mountains; being in our happy place using humor and with family; being safe, being cozy, being silly when people are mean -- killing them with kindness; traveling; sleeping; grandparents; animals. We spent the rest of the day with pictures. Students take cameras and phones and iPads and walk around for an hour and take pictures.