

# Camp HOPE as an Intervention for Children Exposed to Domestic Violence: A Program Evaluation of Hope, and Strength of Character

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**Abstract** Children exposed to domestic violence are at risk for physical, mental, and social difficulties that have received an increased focus among researchers and policy makers. Using Snyder's (2000) theory of Hope as a conceptual framework, Camp HOPE America is a summer camp program targeting school-aged children exposed to domestic violence. The purpose of this study is to present the changes in child hope before and after camp and correlate child hope to positive character strengths as rated by camp counselors. This study used a matched pretest posttest design to examine the change in hope, and strength of character among 229 school-aged children participating in Camp HOPE America. Results showed that hope, and psychological strengths improved from pre-test to post-test assessments. Additionally, children's scores on hope were positively associated with the character strengths of zest, grit, self-control, optimism, gratitude, social intelligence, and curiosity obtained from counselor observations. These findings highlight hope as a coping resource for children exposed to domestic violence and provides preliminary support Camp HOPE America as an intervention within the established Family Justice Center system in the US.

**Keywords** Children exposed to domestic violence · Hope · Character strength · Camp HOPE

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## Introduction

Researchers estimate that upwards of 18.8 million children in the US witness domestic violence across their lifetime (Hamby, Finkelhor, Turner, & Ormrod, 2011). Several meta-analytic studies find that children exposed to domestic violence are at a higher risk for emotional, social, and behavioral difficulties both in the short- and long-term (Evans, Cavies, & DiLillo, 2008; Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt, & Kenny, 2003; Wolfe, Crooks, Lee, McIntyre-Smith, & Jaffe, 2003). Children exposed to domestic violence experience additional stresses associated with the trauma of repeated separations, child custody battles, and isolation from extended family supports. Children exposed to domestic violence are also at a significantly higher risk for abuse and neglect (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999). An emerging literature indicates that children exposed to domestic violence are also likely to experience other forms of victimization (e.g., abuse, neglect). Indeed, research has recently brought attention to the prevalence of co-occurring or poly-victimization (cf. Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007; Finkelhor, Turner, Hamby, & Ormrod, 2011). In a US national sample of youth between the ages of 2–17, Finkelhor et al. (2009) found eight out of ten children have experienced at least one victimization with respondents reporting an average of 3.7 victimizations.

While the research on exposure to domestic violence continues to emerge, existing evidence suggests these children are at risk for increased anxiety, depression, social isolation, increased physical and psychological aggression, and propensity to perpetuate the cycle of domestic violence (Carlson, 1990; Lichter & McClosky, 2004; Litrownik, Newton, & Hunter, 2003). Exposure to childhood trauma is associated with higher the rates of illness, disease, and

criminality in adults (Felitti & Anda, 2010; Reavis, Looman, Franco, & Rojas, 2013).

As such, there is a need for system level intervention that can document research-supported practices focused on children exposed to domestic violence. The purpose of this study is to assess the change in children's hope among participants of Camp HOPE America (Gwinn, 2015). The primary focus of this program evaluation is to assess children's hope along with a sense of belonging, support and encouragement, believing they can achieve their dreams (resilience), and strength of character (e.g., Zest, Grit, Self-Control, Optimism, Gratitude, Social Intelligence, and Curiosity). This study is important for several reasons. First, while hope has been shown to be an important resource for adults and children, no studies exist focusing on children exposed to domestic violence. Second, Camp HOPE America uses Snyder's (2002) Hope Theory as the foundation of its activities and is situated within the multi-agency, multi-disciplinary Family Justice Center model of service delivery with an estimated 136 centers existing across the US. Therefore, this study represents the first empirical assessment of an emerging camping and mentoring model that can offer a intervention that has the capacity to generalize to children exposed to domestic violence at a national level.

### Hope Theory

Hope refers to the positive expectation we have toward the attainment of a future oriented goal. While the target of hope can be in the short or long-term (e.g., obtaining a hot meal vs. a life free from domestic violence), the outcome exists with some degree of possibility rather than certainty. In social work, hope represents a core aspect of the strengths perspective in the helping process (Collins, 2015; McCarter, 2007; Powell & Blanchet-Cohen, 2014; Rapp, Saleebey, & Sullivan, 2005; Saleebey, 1996, 2000; Smaldino, 1975; Sullivan & Floyd, 2013). Freire's (1996) quote, "There is no change without the dream, as there is no dream without hope," (p. 91) illustrates the role of hope as a psychological strength buffering the negative consequences experienced from adversity such as witnessing domestic violence.

Snyder's (2000) hope theory has received growing empirical support as a goal-oriented psychological strength that promotes well being across the lifespan. Moreover, Snyder has developed brief self-report measures for both adults and children that has shown positive psychometric characteristics across samples (Bryant & Harrison, 2015; Hellman, Pittman, & Munoz, 2013). Snyder (2000) described hope as a cognitive-based motivational theory in which children learn to create strategies as a means to attain their desired goals. Hope theory has two fundamental

cognitive processes termed "pathways" and "agency". Pathway thought processes are the mental strategies or road maps toward goal attainment. In this process, children consider various pathways to their goals. Once viable pathways are formed, the hopeful child is able to conceive of potential barriers and develop strategies to overcome the barriers or switch to alternative pathways. Agency thinking refers to the mental energy or willpower the child can direct and sustain toward their goal pursuits. Hopeful children are able to exert mental energy to their pathways and persevere by self-regulating their thoughts, emotions and behaviors toward their desirable goal.

Snyder (1995) described the process of nurturing hope for a child begins with goal setting strategies. Here, a child begins to experience the possibility of a positive future; this attention to a newly considered goal results in the short-term increase in agentic thinking. During this increase in agency, the social worker can work with the motivated child to identify pathways to achieving the goal while considering likely barriers. It is important that pathways have measurable benchmarks that allow the child to experience early success indicators, which results in increased agency. This illustration demonstrates the interplay between the hope processes of pathways and agency thinking. Alternatively, children who have experienced repeated failed attempts at goal pursuits often recognize their deficits in both pathways and agency thoughts. These low hope children will face future goals with negativity, their lack of assets, and a focus on the probability of failure (Snyder, 1995). Thus, goals that are significantly blocked result in anger, frustration, and despair. When a child is unable to overcome a barrier, the final result is apathy or hopelessness (e.g., lack of motivation and goal directed behavior). The important reminder of these processes is that hope and hopelessness can be learned and reflects the importance of the child's interaction with the social and environmental context.

The role of hope in a child's capacity to flourish is well established. Hopeful thinking among children is positively associated with perceived competence and self-worth (Kwon, 2000) as well as lower depression and anxiety (Ong, Edwards, & Bergeman, 2006). Higher hope children are more optimistic about the future, have stronger problem solving skills, and develop more life goals. Hopeful children are less likely to have behavior problems or experience psychological distress. These children also report better interpersonal relationships and higher school achievement success in the areas of attendance, grades, graduation rates, and college going rates (Pedrotti, Edwards, & Lopez, 2008). Moreover, hope has been shown to serve as a resilience factor when facing stressful life events among children (Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2006). Finally, hope was shown to be positively associated with

emotional well being in a six-year longitudinal study investigating hope and positive youth development (Ciarrochi, Parker, Kashdan, Heaven, & Barkus, 2015).

### Camp HOPE America

Camp HOPE America ([www.camphopeamerica.com](http://www.camphopeamerica.com)) is the first local, state, and national camping and mentoring initiative in the United States to focus on children exposed to domestic violence. The vision for Camp HOPE America is to break the generational cycle of family violence by offering healing and hope to children who have witnessed family violence. Camp HOPE America is a program of Alliance for HOPE International ([www.allianceforhope.com](http://www.allianceforhope.com)). Alliance for HOPE International is the umbrella organization for all Family Justice Centers and similar multi-agency models serving victims of domestic violence and their children throughout the United States.

### Camp HOPE Program

The Camp HOPE Program is a values-based summer camping and mentoring model with a six-day program and follow-up activities during the school year. The program focuses on three key elements: (1) “Challenge by Choice” activities; (2) Affirmation and Praise for developing and observed character traits; and (3) Themed, small group discussion and activities focused on helping children set goals and pursue viable pathways. Challenge by Choice refers to challenging children to set daily achievement goals by pursuing activities with perceived danger or risk (e.g., canoeing, zip line) while allowing them to opt out of those activities if the challenge creates unmanageable stress or fear. Campers are positively encouraged to engage in the personal challenges presented, however no camper is coerced, negatively pressured or unconstructively persuaded to take part in an activity. Campers are encouraged to support each other in their personal challenge by choice whether they determine to undertake a particular activity or not. All activities are designed to promote: creative thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, teamwork and mutual support, reasoning, self-esteem, competency, self-management, group trust, organization, and goal setting. Even if campers do not participate in challenging activities, they are expected to participate in other daily camp activities and to follow all safety and group protocols. For safety reasons, campers are not allowed to leave the group setting or be alone at any time (the exception includes toileting or showering).

All recreational activities were supervised by trained Camp staff members who also operated weekly summer camps that are not focused on children exposed to family violence. Specialized program activities and other

therapeutic components were managed by Camp HOPE staff members employed by Alliance for HOPE International. Using a trauma-informed camper/counselor approach, Camp HOPE focuses on providing affirmation and encouragement including campfire sessions where children received character trait awards each day from their peers or adult counselors. Camp HOPE program activities are site specific but has included rafting, tubing, high and low ropes challenge courses (age specific), horseback riding, arts and crafts, kayaking and canoeing, recreational hiking and field games, skits and camp songs, nightly campfires, journaling, KBAR (kick back and relax) time in the cabins/tents each day with counselors and campers, camp fire group discussions each night (“Where did you see hope today?”), three family-style meals each day (eating with their own cabin group), and other relationship-oriented times. Each day at Camp HOPE there is a positive statement for the day. These included: “I am a unique masterpiece,” “I am becoming my best self,” “We need each other,” “My future is brighter than my past,” and “My best self is within reach.” By having a positive statement for each day, children had the opportunity to internalize their own uniqueness, personal progress, need for others, future-oriented focus, and perseverance. Children did not have “free time” at Camp HOPE and children were never without an adult mentor or adult counselor (with the exception of toilet/showering needs). All electronics including cell phones, laptops, and other devices were collected and turned off when children arrived at camp. Electronic items were then returned after the conclusion of the camping week.

One of the key elements of Camp HOPE was the use of a de-centralized programming model. In this particular model, each cabin was paired with another cabin of a similar age. Older campers (11–17 year olds) were paired with a cabin of the opposite sex. Younger campers (7–11 year olds) were paired with similarly aged campers of the same sex. The combined cabins were referred to as a “track” or “circle.” Throughout the week, each track/circle participated in the various camp activities together and built relationships within the smaller group instead of simply participating in all activities in a large group.

In 2015, Camp HOPE children also included foster children, group home children, and a small group of children not receiving services in an existing Family Justice Center. All the children attending Camp HOPE had been exposed to and/or witnessed family violence prior to coming to Camp HOPE. Approximately 20 % of the children attending had also been physically and sexually abused children as well. A subset of 64 participating campers had been administered the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) questionnaire which ranges from 0 to 10 to quantify the number of trauma experiences. This

assessment was administered to a subset of children over the age of 11 and assessed by a Family Justice Center counselor. The average ACE score for the 64 campers was 5.51 ( $SD = 2.38$ ) with a median score of 5.0 and a mode of 4.0. Indeed, 79.4 % of these children had an ACE score of 4 or higher. Comparatively, the Center for Disease Control Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Study with over 17,000 participants report that 12.5 % of the population have an ACE score of 4 or higher. Additionally, Ford et al. (2014), with a sample of 57,703 subjects, found an average ACE score of 1.61. Results of a one sample  $t$  test [ $t(62) = 12.99; p < .05$ ] demonstrate that the average ACE score for our sample of Camp HOPE children was significantly higher than the national rate (Ford et al., 2014).

## Method

### Assessment Procedure

Two hundred and thirty-eight surveys were administered to the youth participants of Camp HOPE during the 2015 summer. A pre-camp and post-camp design was utilized. Children received the pre-camp survey thirty days prior to camp and post-camp surveys were collected the final morning of camp. Individual Family Justice Centers coordinated the recruiting and selecting of children and the obtaining of consent from parents/caregivers/guardians prior to data collection. These data were matched to the post-camp assessments and de-identified prior to delivering to the first author for statistical analyses. This protocol was approved by the University of Oklahoma IRB.

### Sample Demographics

Pre-camp surveys were completed by 234 children while 237 post-camp survey were completed. Ultimately, 229 completed pre and post surveys were matched, resulting in a 96.2 % match rate. Specific demographic characteristics of the children were limited in the survey. However, the average age of the respondent was 10.8 years ( $SD = 2.57$ ). Two hundred and thirty-four children reported their gender with 48.7 % males and 51.3 % females. In addition to the child self-report assessment, camp counselors completed pre and post observation based assessments for each camper that were matched to the 229 camper self-assessments.

### Measurement—Child Self-Report

#### *Children's Hope*

Hope was assessed using the Children's Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1997) which examines the extent to which

children believe they can establish pathways to their goals as well as develop and maintain the will power to follow these pathways. This measure is comprised of six self-report items with a six-point Likert-Type response format (1 = none of the time; 6 = all of the time). Scores can range from a low of six to a high of 36. Thus, higher scores reflect higher hope. Internal consistency reliability analysis for the data collected in this study indicated a Pre-Hope  $\alpha = .77$  and Post-Hope  $\alpha = .81$ .

### Measurement: Counselor Observations

#### *Hope Index*

Counselors were asked to complete the Children's Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1997) for each camper in their respective group. Similar to Snyder (2005), items were modified to reflect an observational assessment approach. For example, the item "I think I am doing pretty well" was reworded to "I think the camper is doing pretty well." The questionnaires included the same six-item children's Hope Scale reworded to fit the observation intent. Internal consistency reliability was adequate for the sample of counselor's (pretest  $\alpha = .92$ ; posttest  $\alpha = .91$ ).

#### *Child Character Strength*

Following the positive psychology foundation that character leads to the capacity to live a fulfilling and meaningful life, we included a 20-item assessment of character strengths from the KIPP Character Counts Growth Card (available: <https://characterlab.org/character-growth-card/>). Following the KIPP Character Counts model, counselors assessed the child in the area of Zest, Grit, Optimism, Self-Control, Gratitude, Social Intelligence, and Curiosity. Counselors rated each camper in their group at the beginning of camp and the final day of camp. Each item was rated on a seven point Likert-Type response (1 = almost never; 7 = almost always) on the frequency of observation. Thus, higher scores reflect higher levels for each character strength assessed. Table 1 provides the character strength observed, definition, number of items, and when 3+ items are used the internal consistency from the pre-test assessment. Internal consistency from the posttest scores are presented in Table 2.

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

Given the growing literature on the positive nature of hope, two questions served to guide this evaluation. First, can hope scores be increased among children exposed to domestic violence? Second, does hope predict adaptive

**Table 1** Character strengths assessed at Camp HOPE

Character strength	Definition
Zest	An approach to life filled with anticipation, excitement, and energy (3 items; $\alpha = .84$ )
Grit	Perseverance and passion for long-term goals (3 items; $\alpha = .83$ )
Optimism	The expectation that the future holds positive possibilities and likelihood (2 items)
Self-control	Capacity to regulate thoughts, feelings, and behaviors when they conflict with interpersonal goals (4 items; $\alpha = .90$ )
Gratitude	Appreciation for the benefits received from others and a desire to reciprocate with positive actions (2 items)
Curiosity	Search for information for its own sake. Exploring a wide range of information when solving problems (3 items; $\alpha = .67$ )
Social intelligence	Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people. (3 items; $\alpha = .82$ )

Note Cronbach's alpha presented for scales with three or more items from pretest scores

**Table 2** Zero-order correlation matrix of hope, resiliency, and strength of character

Item	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
Child scores										
1. Hope	(.85)									
2. Resiliency	.79*	(.86)								
Counselor observations										
3. Hope	.28*	.39*	(.91)							
4. Zest	.35*	.38*	.69*	(.82)						
5. Grit	.21*	.26*	.66*	.51*	(.79)					
6. Self-control	.22*	.30*	.61*	.43*	.73*	(.90)				
7. Optimism	.27*	.36*	.72*	.58*	.65*	.71*	–			
8. Gratitude	.36*	.41*	.67*	.67*	.60*	.56*	.72*	–		
9. Social intelligence	.36*	.38*	.70*	.63*	.65*	.71*	.70*	.73*	(.86)	
10. Curiosity	.34*	.43*	.72*	.65*	.61*	.58*	.66*	.71*	.67*	(.70)

Note Values in parenthesis reflect Cronbach's Alpha for scores obtained at posttest.  $N = 233$ . \*  $p < .05$

outcomes for children exposed to domestic violence? This resulted in the following hypotheses.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Children attending Camp HOPE will report an increase in their hope scores from pretest to posttest.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Children attending Camp HOPE will report an increase in positive character scores as reported by camp counselors.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Child hope scores at the posttest will be positively correlated with child character strength posttest scores as observed by camp counselors.

## Results

A series of repeated measures analysis of variance was computed to investigate the level of change between pre-test and post-test on children's self-report of hope as well as the counselor assessments of camper hope, zest, grit, self-control, optimism, gratitude, curiosity, and social intelligence. Given the number of comparisons, a

Bonferroni correction was used for to control the type I error, which was set at .007. While paired sample  $t$  test could be used in each comparison, the resulting ANOVA  $F$ -ratio is equivalent to  $t^2$  and provides additional information relative to effect size estimates (partial eta-squared).

### Child Self-Report

The results of this repeated measures ANOVA showed that the increase in children's hope scores from pre-test ( $M = 25.40$ ;  $SD = 5.38$ ) to post-test ( $M = 26.75$ ;  $SD = 6.19$ ) was statistically significant [ $F(1,228) = 15.15$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $\eta^2 = .06$ ]. Moreover, the partial eta square indicates that estimated rate of change as small (cf. Cohen, 1992).

### Counselor Assessment

The repeated measures ANOVA showed the increase in hope pre-test scores ( $M = 23.23$ ;  $SD = 5.92$ ) compared to

the post-test scores ( $M = 25.13$ ;  $SD = 5.64$ ) were also statistically significant [ $F(1219) = 30.95$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $\eta^2 = .12$ ] and of moderate strength. Moreover, all increases in character strength observations were statistically significant. More specifically, post-test observations showed a moderate and significant increase for zest [ $F(1229) = 46.63$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $\eta^2 = .17$ ], grit [ $F(1228) = 30.86$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $\eta^2 = .12$ ], gratitude [ $F(1229) = 44.36$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $\eta^2 = .16$ ], and curiosity [ $F(1229) = 46.51$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $\eta^2 = .17$ ]. Small yet statistically significant increases in mean scores were observed for self-control [ $F(1229) = 9.50$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $\eta^2 = .04$ ], optimism [ $F(1229) = 20.16$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $\eta^2 = .08$ ], and social intelligence [ $F(1229) = 18.13$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $\eta^2 = .07$ ] respectively.

### Correlation Analysis

As seen in Table 2, the correlational analysis demonstrated that an increase in children's self reported hope was associated with increased scores in the child's observed character strengths. More specifically, higher scores in Hope were associated with higher levels of energy (Zest), perseverance toward goals (Grit), ability to regulate thoughts, feelings and behaviors (Self-Control), an expectation that the future holds positive possibilities (Optimism), appreciation toward others (Gratitude), desire to seek out new things (Curiosity), and awareness of the feelings and motivations of others (Social Intelligence). Additionally, child self-reported hope was positively associated with counselor observation of the child's hope.

### Discussion

Given that upwards of 18+ million children are exposed to domestic violence in the US and that exposure can have negative effects on physical, mental, and social well-being research examining positive youth development is noteworthy. More specifically, activities for Camp HOPE America are based upon Snyder's (2002) theory of hope and are operated by Alliance for Hope International, the parent organizational structure for multi-agency, multi-disciplinary domestic violence-oriented Family Justice Centers located across the US, Canada, Latin America, and Europe. This study represents the first research to examine the Camp HOPE America model as it relates to increases in children's hope and character strength as an intervention for children exposed to domestic violence. The findings include significant increases in hope as reported by children several days prior to camp and on the last day of

camp. Additionally, counselors completed an observational assessment on each child and found significant increases in the character strengths of hope, zest, grit, self-control, optimism, gratitude, social intelligence, and curiosity. Finally, the correlational analyses demonstrated that children's self-reported hope were positively associated with camp counselor's observations of the child's character strength. Our findings are consistent with other research (Chang & DeSimone, 2001; Kwok, Gu, & Kit, 2016; Marques, Lopez, & Pais-Ribeiro, 2011) suggesting that brief hope interventions with children can increase their psychological strengths and well being.

Children exposed to domestic violence and who live in chaos and fear experience a multitude of negative stressful situations and in the absence of strategic intervention these experiences will manifest into potentially negative psychological and behavioral reactions that make life difficult (Benavides, 2015). Hope, as a psychological strength, is a protective resource that can help children cope with stress and adversity associated with domestic violence (Benavides, 2015; Chang, 1998; Ciarrochi, Heaven, & Davies, 2007; Horton & Wallander, 2001; Valle et al., 2006). Children with high levels of hope have a greater capacity to identify viable pathways and dedicate mental energy to their goals. Moreover, the relationship found in our study suggests that hope is associated with striving for opportunities (zest, grit, optimism, curiosity), the ability to regulate thoughts and feelings (self-control), and understanding and appreciating of the actions, motives and feelings of others (social intelligence, gratitude). Consistent with the positive psychology literature, these character strengths predict well being and provide psychological resources to enhance coping during difficult times (Park & Peterson, 2009).

### Camp HOPE America

Camp HOPE America is informed by Snyder's hope theory (2002) and the challenge by choice activities are designed to enhance and support pathways and agency cognitions among children exposed to domestic violence. Camp HOPE America's curriculum is designed to enhance goal setting, pathways thinking, and inspire goal attainment in children who have experienced the adversity associated with domestic violence. Camp HOPE America is the first camp in the United States focused entirely on children exposed to domestic violence and other related abuse with a dedicated curriculum designed to change the way the children view themselves and their futures. While preliminary in nature, the findings from our evaluation of Camp HOPE support its strengths approach to empowering children toward a positive orientation to the future.

## Limitations

While the results of this study are promising, potential limitations must be considered when interpreting the findings. First, a pre-experimental one-group pretest posttest design was employed to measure changes in hope and the other character strengths, no control group was used to bolster confidence in the internal validity that increases, while statistically significant, were directly related to the Camp HOPE experience. Furthermore, given the lack of follow-up the sustainability of these positive changes remain in question. The use of control groups in intervention research can be difficult for many reasons. However, Camp HOPE is a model situated within operating and developing Family Justice Centers, which provide a coalition approach to social services for families experiencing domestic violence. Therefore, to further test the efficacy of this intervention, future research could pursue a longitudinal design perhaps including children from a Family Justice Center that as yet has not established a Camp HOPE intervention to fashion a wait-list comparative control group. Among other potential limitations is the use of self-report survey research for both children and the observational assessment by the adult camp counselors. While Snyder's hope theory and the child measurement are both empirically supported, the potential for response biases like social desirability remains. While it is a potential methodological strength that an additional assessment included the observations of camp counselors, potential biases limited the generalizability of the findings. In particular is the significant limitation in the camp counselor ability to meaningfully provide a pre-observational assessment on the first day of camp. Additionally, while the participating children were recruited from nine geographically separated Family Justice Center communities, the participants from this study reflect a limited sample of children exposed to domestic violence from the west coast of the US. Finally, while improvements in hope and character strength were statistically significant; the effect size estimates found in this study were small and is yet unclear if these changes can be sustained across time. Clearly, replications, refinements and extensions are desired. These preliminary findings set the stage for researchers to engage in quasi-experimental or experimental evaluations to examine the impact of Camp HOPE on children exposed to domestic violence.

## Discussion and Implications for Research

Empirical evidence demonstrates the significance between exposure to domestic violence and a child's potential for physical, psychological, social, and behavioral difficulties (Evans et al., 2008; Summers, 2006). Research supported

community based intervention models, such as Camp HOPE America, that target that children can potentially mitigate these negative effects and promote hope as a psychological asset. This study offers at least two compelling contributions. First, this study is the first of its kind to investigate hope and character strength among children exposed to domestic violence. Second, this study offers new empirical evidence supporting the Camp HOPE America model as an effective community based intervention that can be implemented across the US given its connection to the Family Justice Center network. This study offers promising information about the initial efficacy of an intervention to increase hope and strength of character among children exposed to domestic violence. It is our intent that this study's findings stimulate additional interest (e.g., research, practitioner, policy makers) in systems level interventions focused on developing character strengths and hope that allow a child impacted by trauma and abuse to flourish.

## Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of Interest** Chan M. Hellman declares no conflict of interest. Casey Gwinn is President of Alliance for HOPE International.

**Ethical Approval** All procedures performed in this study were in accordance with the ethical standards of the university and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

**Informed Consent** Informed consent was obtained for all individual participants included in the study.

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