A Workshop in Creative Problem Solving Skills to Enhance Resilience in Low-Socioeconomic Status Black Males

Najja A. Bouldin
International Center for Studies in Creativity, bouldin01@mail.buffalostate.edu

Advisor

Jon Michael Fox

SUNY-Buffalo State
International Center for Studies in Creativity

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A Project
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Science

May 2017

Abstract

Creative problem solving skills are an important tool in many areas of life. This project is a written account of what a workshop and coaching methods for Black males of low socio-economic status (SES) who attend an intensive creative problem solving skill-strengthening boot camp to enhance resiliency looks like in real time. This a workshop of creative problem solving skills and resilience enhancement, a intensive intervention based on Creative Resilience work and low socio-economic Black males' engagement in this CPS by increasing awareness of the need to change and/or enhance creativity and resilience. Participants in a six module, group, and twelve session coaching format steeped cognitive rational semantics were observed in this workshop.

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Dates of Approval:

_____   _____
                                                        Project Advisor: J. Michael Fox

_____   _____
                                                        Candidate: Najja Bouldin

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Introduction

Creative problem solving skills are an important tool in many areas of life. This project is a written account of what a workshop and coaching methods for Black males of low socio-economic status (SES) who attend an intensive creative problem solving skill-strengthening boot camp to enhance resiliency looks like in real time. There's a plethora of leadership, talent, and raw grit that comes out of low-SES communities, or "the hood" (for the sake of brevity and context authenticity). However, because of systematic social injustices like the prison industrial complex, Rockefeller drug laws, and cultural issues such as victimization, said raw talent rarely gets attention from researchers (Wilson, 1987). As a result, "the hood" loses valuable pillars of their communities and families are destroyed; children grow-up fatherless, parents lose their sons, and wives lose husbands (Wilson, 1987).

Due largely to social injustices, Black males are constantly at risk of becoming negative conduits in low-SES communities by perpetuating vicious cycles of dysfunction and chaos through the peddling of illicit drugs and terror (Anderson, 1994). In spite of catastrophic influences that loom in low-SES America, there are Black males that subconsciously exercise their creativity in myriad ways in order to hurdle obstacles as well as seek out and take advantage of salient opportunities critical to the execution of their dreams. This project is a preemptive intervention workshop, which beckons the notion that Creative Problem Solving skills build resilience among low-SES Black males who experience recurrent trauma.

Currently, there is insufficient information on studies of resilience and there is a lack of research on workshops related to creativity and resilience that cater explicitly to this demographic (Wilson, 1987). This paper will illustrate the importance of using CPS skills to build resilience in Black males. Specifically, in a time where racial tension, mass incarceration, inverted genocide, and police brutality statistics are high, a CPS skill-enhancing workshop is a positive-micro imperative with an intensive macro impact. This concentration has huge implications for the academic community, Social workers that will refer young men from the juvenile justice system, Social Science researchers, and the United States Judicial system will have a proactive and productive means of supporting these individuals.

Importance of Resilience in low-SES Black males

Holleran and Jung (2005) studied acculturative stress, violence, and resilience in the lives of Mexican American youth. They found that Mexican-Americans, individually, undergo tremendous stressors in assimilating to mainstream American culture. These young individuals display an exceptional amount of resilience in overcoming schisms, trauma, and an array of abuses. Similar to Mexican Americans, low-SES Black males encounter acculturative stressors – daily. Although this may be true, the dynamics of said acculturation differs from Mexican-Americans because African-American culture is considered an indigenous American culture. At the same time, low-SES Black males of "ghetto" America are akin to "Wetbacks" (Mexican immigrants) and African American males are similar to the Chicano (American born-Mexicans) subjects referred to in Holleran and Jung's study.

Under these circumstances, 'hood culture is a subculture of African-American culture. This demographic is usually mentioned in media followed by devastation, destitution, disruption, decimation, and disappointment. Americans of low socio-economic status can sometimes carry a stigma of hopelessness, learned helplessness, self-hatred, or one of the many other dysfunctions associated with the 'hood. This paradigm forms a schism between those of low-SES (to clarify, Black Americans) and African-Americans–that have adopted the rites and customs of mainstream American culture (Wilson, 1987). Here, the highest significance of being an all out "street guy" is of the lowest significance to not only African Americans, but to mainstream culture as a whole. Criminal enterprises such as drug-dealing/trafficking, financial scamming, "boosting" (stealing from retail shops and malls), robbing, and even killing are seen as a viable means of escaping poverty (Anderson, 1994). Thus, forging a new culture of thriving by any means necessary for Blacks in America where, "Being Black is not a matter of pigmentation – being Black is a reflection of mental attitude" –Stephen Bantu Biko.

Ironically, this behavior lends itself to the growing trend in mass-incarceration (Prison-Industrial complex) and systematic oppression among low-SES Black males. Across America, low-SES Black communities are, essentially, raped of its protectors. Sturdy, low-level political leaders are vocally castrated once convicted on a felony, leaving them virtually functionless in a society that needs them the most. Felons in the United States are unable to vote, denied Federal employment (as well as many other employment options), forbidden from holding political office, can never sit for jury duty, and forfeit the right to bear arms. Carrying a felony can curb ambition and bolster a sense of hopelessness and slave-like cognition (Pager, 2003).

On the contrary, there are low-SES Black males that exploit their creativity to find positive solutions to poverty, felony conviction, stress, trauma, and struggle. Equally important, is a formulaic response to the ubiquitous negativity in the 'hood that, in real time, assists the clients in transforming perspectives and expectations of their communities into creative products that will allow these individuals to tap into their spirituality for guidance (Curry, et al., 2013). This paper suggests that these individuals exercise an exceptional order of CPS ability to gradually increase resiliency. The group dynamic in this workshop will foster positive chain reactions, which cultivates resiliency characteristics like positive peer relations, self-efficacy, creativity, and coherence-progressively (Waaktaar, et al., 2004).

Method

The workshop, titled Creative Resilience, allows for exploration and fantasy play of the participant's ideal selves away from the streets and street life. Participants will undergo positive life fulfillment exercises that are strewn throughout workshop modules like stress management, building credit and investment bank accounts, managing healthy relationships, the importance of organizing, filing tax returns, and child support skills. Exercises such as those mentioned above will serve, proactively, in sharpening these individuals' skills through extensive role-play in real world scenarios that are set in and/or around their communities.

To put it another way, the same corners and "trap" (drug) houses participants either live in or around would be utilized to highlight risk factors that contribute to rising mass-incarceration trends in which low-resilience lends itself to higher rates of

incarceration (Wilson, 1987). Following these exercises will be a session debrief where leaders and professionals of the community come in and share similar stories of resilience, and the importance of Black males in low socio-economic communities. Novel approaches to issues that may emotionally disrupt clients will require a level of vulnerability and openness to change. Frequently, clients will be able to use this aggravation in the workshop, role-playing instances of pain and hurt in similar settings to be sure clients acquire positive reinforcement from group members and leaders to promote positive chain reactions that propagate resilience.

Members of the workshop will also be encouraged to share instances where they were readily resilient in the face of severe stress and/or trauma to augment testimonials of others. Creative Resilience workshops will elicit strengths and assets of individuals of the group by specific task objectives that will nurture positive chain-reactions, which build resilience. I will collect observable data that can be later used to construct an assessment tool. The Creative Resilience workshop is not designed for persons with mental health challenges, but rather for those looking for twenty-first century workplace and enterprising professional skills.

Who Are The Participants, And Where Do They Come From?

For this study, a purposive sample of 20 low socioeconomic status Black males who experience recurrent trauma will be studied; however, this workshop will have self-selected participants. The age of these participants is not a criterion; rather, will they be of low-socioeconomic status and Black males. This workshop will cater to individuals that may be looking for transformative and/or therapeutic assistance but don't know

where to find it. Psychiatric professionals will be used to perform assessments of clients prior to the start of each session to establish that clients are mentally fit for the exercises that, directly, face and overcome traumatic instances.   Inferential statistics could be limited by subjects that are overwhelmed by burdens happening outside of the closed one day Creative Resilience session that occurs once a week for six-weeks. It is suggested that researchers advertise in local magazines and periodicals, as well as partner with local community-based agencies like Buffalo Urban League, Horizon Health, churches, and community centers in recruiting Black males that identify as Black, male, low-SES, and that are looking to acquire workplace and enterprising professional skills.

Overview of This Two-Hour Workshop

The first time this goes into the field, it will be a two-hour workshop. The methodology will include measures of strengths and areas for development.   One measure will be a pre-survey and a post-survey assessing creativity and resilience in low socioeconomic status Black males. In a recent Bloomberg/BusinessWeek study, job recruiters identified Creative Problem Solving among the top 5 skills for success. It also says that Resilience is a top-rated skill for effective leadership. Sadly, the same recruiters said Creative Problem Solving was the second most difficult skill to find among job applicants; also, that 46 percent of new hires fail in the first 18 months and 89 percent of them failed for attitudinal reasons. Numerous studies agree, in today's fast changing and volatile work environment, creative thinking and resilience are two of the most crucial skills for professional success (Puccio, 2016, personal conversation).

Purpose Flow of the Two-Hour Workshop

This 2-hour, hands-on presentation is designed to provide participants with a proven set of principles and tools for enhanced creative problem solving and leadership skills that will be immediately applicable at home, and in the workplace. There will be time set aside before the workshop actually begins to complete the pre-survey. The PowerPoint presentation used in this workshop is composed of the lesson plan developed to deliver this content, so no further material is needed to convey the content of this workshop.

Warming-Up

Next, participants will complete a warm-up such as responding to, "What do you think creativity is?" The warm-up does two things: It gets them engaged and it generates data on what participants believe creativity is. This notion of gathering data validates participants' beliefs, values, even definitions of creativity. To put it simply, it validates them, as well as giving me ways to proceed in digging deeper.

Digging Deeper

Digging deeper is the presenter giving a presentation about what it is that we know about creativity. The presentation will give them new data about the theories and principles of creativity. This will be followed by an experiential exercise.

The next step will be a presentation of the relationship between creativity and resilience. This will again be followed by an experiential exercise.

Extending The Jewels

Here, the presenter works with the participants to debrief what they have just learned using Gaw's Learning Cycle (Gaw, 1979). Following this, the presenter will

have the participants complete the post-training survey, which will occur after the workshop has been completed.

A View Of The Six-Day Workshop

Few articles look at Creative Problem Solving skills and resilience together, which suggests that this research is cutting-edge. This will require an Institutional Review Board category II study because, dredging-up and working through repressed memories may remit trauma. This study is designed to handle this harm by utilizing CPS tools to assist clients in changing their perspectives of past scars into present pillars of strength.

This hypothesis suggests a relationship between the variables: Creative Problem Solving tools (predictor) and resilience (criterion). Possible extraneous factors that might affect results are: other workshops that build similar skills, positive experiences of our participants at the time of the workshop, and personal relationships – because of the sheer impact they have on participants. Low-SES Black males will be able to express resilience regarding trauma after learning Creative Problem Solving skills.

Transformation Coaching

Coaching is a journey, not a destination – not a single event but a process. W. Edwards Deming once said, "Nothing happens without personal transformation." Coaching serves as the more intimate option to transformation that sanctions a more hands-on person-to-person approach. Coaching helps individuals create new ways of being, thinking skills, and overall practice. Coaching helps to make coachees' strengths productive. Last, transformation coaching helps coachees set their own challenging goals. For this, they will need an internal commitment, authentic/valid information, and

they must be free to make an informed choice. Here, my performance coaching efforts in

Creative Resilience builds on the more than sixty years of theory/seminal research and

practice in the domain of Creativity, Cognitive Rational Semantics, and Creative Problem

Solving skills done by the International Center for Studies in Creativity, SUNY Buffalo

State. These skills and principles are referred to extensively in promoting sustaining

transformation.

Creating new knowledge – new management culture is the transformational

coach. "As people reach the limits of their existing ways of being, thinking styles, and

habits, this naturally generates the need for coaching" (Hargrove, 1995, p 10). The

ability to consistently create this new knowledge purposefully will be to an individual's

advantage. Imagination breeds creativity. Creativity produces options. In those options

we find freedom. However, if most of lose our imagination by the fourth grade – what

effect might that have on an individual's options, freedom even? By introducing Creative

Problem Solving skills and tools as well as adhering to the principles of divergent

thinking, participants will be able to form better mental connections (i.e., Forced

Connections), as well as practice deliberate creativity. Participants learn that although

the hardships of life are unavoidable, creativity, when practiced regularly, fashions us an

unassailable armor. Because every one of us is born with pure imagination, such

imagination-breeds us charming creativity. Within this creativity we forge/invent

options, and in these options we find unrelenting freedom.

Internal commitment – "…coaching involves expanding people's capacity to take

effective action. It most often comes down to making it possible for people to succeed in

areas where they are most stuck or ineffective" (Hargrove, 1995, p 15). "Who am I?"

"What might I do that I care passionately about?" This question of "Who am I?" is so important for embarking on such a heavy transition. "Who Am I?" beckons more than just the spiffy adjectives (i.e., good or bad) that may have been placed upon these individuals up to this point. Here, we reflect on instances that define and/or refine a participant's character and add proper verbiage to these narratives so that these participants can create the critical criteria necessary in fashioning themselves as the role model(s) they previously would never identify with. While working within the confines of Cognitive Rational Semantics, I will begin to identify the inception of maladaptive processes/challenges by attending to the language the coachees use in framing their issues and concerns. Albert Einstein famously quoted, "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

Cognitive Rational Semantics, or CRS, allows coachees to explore the possibilities in utilizing positive language and new thinking. To illustrate, by adding Statement Starters to concerns coachees are better able to explore the possibilities in novel data. For example, instead of saying, "I don't have the money to buy a new car," or, "I can't buy a house until I build a better credit rating," coachees will learn to open their minds to new approaches by adding Statement Starters like *How to… (H2), How might… (HM), In what ways might… (IWWM), What might be all the… (WMBAT)*. A new way of stating the above concerns might read, "*How might* I earn more money for a new car," or, "*What might be at the* ways of leveraging my current credit rating in real estate acquisition?" The simple addition of a Statement Starter will transform a seemingly dead-end problem/concern into a solid Challenge Statement. This minor

adjustment clarifies the situation and permits the coachee to determine just where the major breakthrough is needed.

In changing the way they see issues or frame problems, coachees begin to really dig into their lives/personal stories and start work that turn traumatic scars into triumphant pillars that vaunt an individual's thinking, strengths and resilience. This newfound awareness highlights strength, as well as weakness. The beauty in knowing weakness is to know just where one needs strength, and how to acquire said strength. The magnificence of knowing strength(s) is to know just what one contributes to a whole. When one knows of his direct contribution, one is in tune with his purpose and meaning. In the words of the late great Muhammad Ali, "I know where I'm going and I know the truth, and I don't have to be what you want me to be. I'm free to be what I want."

The Coaching Process

Transformational coaching is not a spectator sport. It is a gritty hands-on approach to building a culture of resilience through an individual's creativity. Coaching is about learning new ways being – reinventing ones self. Note to the individual being coached: Instead of an "outside – in" process this is an "inside-out" process. In order to digest the process(es) undertaken, participants will need lots of personal reflection to really get down to what it is they care about. In partnership with their coach, coachees utilize the Quad-Core Processing technique. This unique approach allows for the achievement of breakthrough goals in life and career while developing deliberate creativity abilities, new leadership skills, cultivating metacognition, and resolving situational barriers that may emerge along the way.

CPS Process

The coaching program starts with a goal-setting process. The client will gain clarity and direction as they envision where they want to be three months from today. Subsequent sessions focus on goal achievement. Also, coach and coachee will work together to map out a customized step-by-step implementation plan of critical criteria necessary to achieve the program goals.

Warming-Up

Next, participants will complete a warm-up such as responding to, "What do you think creativity is?" or, "What might be all the ways to get a hippo out of the tub?" The warm-up does two things: It gets them engaged and it generates data on what participants believe creativity is. This notion of gathering data validates participants' beliefs, values, even definitions of, not only creativity, but also the principles and ideals coachees uphold in their lives. To put it simply, it validates them, as well as giving us ways to proceed in digging deeper.

Digging Deeper

Digging deeper is the coach giving a presentation about what it is that we know about creativity. The coach will give them new data about the theories and principles of creativity and encourage the coachee to internalize and operationalize this new knowledge in a personal way. This will be followed by an experiential exercise where we dig into what it means to gather and cultivate social, investment/credential-izing, and relationship capital–creatively, and the bearing this all has on financial capital. The next step will be a presentation of the relationship between creativity and resilience. This will

again be followed by an experiential exercise. In subsequent coaching sessions, client

and coach brainstorm ideas, learn proven leadership principles and best practices, and

discuss other techniques used successfully.

Extending the Jewels

At the conclusion of every session, the best ideas become measurable action

accountabilities. The client will be supported to build these skills until they become

unconsciously skilled, or simply put, second nature. During the last two sessions, the

coach works with the client to debrief what they have just learned using Gaw's Learning

Cycle (Gaw, 1979), and client will share her/his testimony of transition and

transformation with PIG.

In every coaching session, we check objectives; evaluate the use of novelty and

deferred judgment, and action accountabilities from the previous session. In addition, we

typically work with individuals in core areas of leadership including: metacognition,

change management, leadership presence, effective management skills, time-

management, communication, and conflict resolution, motivating stakeholders, personal

branding and the like.

The coaching engagement typically includes two one-hour meetings or calls per

week for the first three weeks, followed by six one-hour meetings or calls to occur on a

weekly basis for the remainder of the coaching contract, as well as email check-ins and

occasional phone check-ins as necessary.

Expectations

In the first 3 months of coaching, the focus is on establishing and achieving goals,

while strengthening deliberate creativity and resilience skills:

❖ Focus on goal achievement, using the Quad-Core Processing technique
❖ Discover and practice new creative leadership skills
❖ Enhancing resilience in effectively overcoming personal barriers and situational hurdles.
❖ Testimonials that center on specific breakthroughs and feedback throughout the coaching cycle.

Many coachees will continue with coaching beyond their initial three-month engagement.

Ongoing coaching brings continuous improvement, as the client:

❖ Takes on and achieve higher level professional goals
❖ Continues developing leadership strengths.

Benefits
Graduates of our coaching programs consistently report the following outcomes:

❖ Improved leadership skills, confidence and presence
❖ Achievement of goals, and business results
❖ Improved ability to persuade, influence and negotiate for results
❖ Greater voice and visibility
❖ Enhanced authority and credibility
❖ Greater recognition and reward for accomplishments
❖ Career advancement, including promotions, and higher level projects
❖ Enhanced organizational awareness, metacognition and ease with navigating politics.

Action guidelines
This process is driven by action guidelines. Here's a short list that digs down to the core of how to get this done. This is not only a workshop or series of modules, but also a follow-up with coaching. The structure of this process emphasizes positive creative leadership by means of solving problems, making mistakes – trial and learn (it's not just the acquisition of new skills. Participant's have to do theses things in real life and learn from them), challenging basic assumptions, and exploring potentials ("What might I do differently?").

Models

A model is more than a picture. Models are the backdrops that drive this stuff so that this information doesn't sit void in a vacuum. It is a mental map that allows an individual to see what comes next on their path of personal evolution/enhancement.

Desired Future State Model (Fritz)

- This will be reflected in the use of rubber bands worn on the wrists of coach and coachees. The rubber band serves as a symbol of the tension created when coachees move further away from their desired future state. As coachees employ this model, they will better understand the principles of 'Assisters and Resisters' of their ideal state.

Breadth of Influence (Puccio)

- This model is captured by an upside down pyramid that represents the four stages of influential expertise displayed by coachees. Working out of consciousness, Breadth of Influence starts in one of four stages: Unconsciously Unskilled. In this area, coachees don't know what they do not know, and this ignorance could prove blissful. Second, is Consciously Unskilled section of the upside-down pyramid where coachees are cognizant of what they do not know. Next, there is the Consciously Skilled section. In this section, coachees realize what they do know and are confident in the criteria. The last section of this pyramid is arguably the most important when it comes to higher order operation. This section is most suitably called Unconsciously Skilled. This is area is akin to the natural phenomenal famously dubbed as "second nature." This is exactly what it means to be practicing out of second nature.

Componential Model of Creativity (Amabile)

- Domain Relevant Skills includes:

    o Knowledge about the domain, technical skills required, and special

      domain-relevant "talent" that depend on:

    o Innate cognitive abilities, innate perceptual skills and motor skills, as well

      as formal and informal education

- Creativity Relevant Skills includes:

    o Appropriate cognitive style, implicit or explicit knowledge of heuristics

      for generating novel data, and conducive work style that depends on:

    o Training, experience in idea generation, and personality characteristics

- Task Motivation [Finding out what they care about] includes:

    o Attitudes toward task, and perceptions of one's own motivation for

      undertaking the task, that depends on:

    o Initial level of intrinsic motivation toward the task, presence or absence of

      salient extrinsic constraints, and individual ability to cognitively minimize

      extrinsic constraints.

Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider)

- The art and science of ferreting out the best in an individual or organization

    through skillful questioning and bringing key stakeholders together with that

    knowledge to plan the future or change the present (Cooperrider, 1990).

    Appreciative Inquiry looks at an individual/organization as a positive force to

understand its strengths, and figure out how to refine and enhance what it is

already doing well. In Creative Resilience we look into the successes rather than

the problems of the individual in question. Discover the distinctive attributes that

we, as a team, can build upon to improve performance and generate strategic

plans.

Major Keys

List assumptions (about life, society, where they fit (ourselves)). Participants will

list these assumptions on post-it notes. Then, participants will take said post-its that most

apply to them and put them under their name(s) on flipchart paper. "I am the locus of my

life and my creativity. For example, "Me! Me! Me! It's all about me." Participants

authentically say this as an authentic benchmark of the transformational success.

Before participants were encouraged to share I thoroughly went over what we in the field

of creativity call the "unwritten rules" of norming up. In these rules participants learned

that we shared a psychologically safe press, and that things discussed were to be held in

the strict confidence of our shared space. Next, that this was a judgment free zone, as

well as the agenda for that day's meeting and what respect meant to all in this space.

During the sharing process, it was essential to instill high standards, integrity,

excellence, discipline, honesty, collaboration, and action (action is important, and needs

to be repeated even if not successful at first). Forward momentum serves this process

well in committing new knowledge to cement memory. The aforementioned objectives

were met over time as a result of this intensive workshop series and/or coaching. Said

objectives are hot item character attributes that answered the begging question of "What's

in it for me to even consider thinking of change?" Being that role models are scarce

within this demographic, access to model residents (felon or not) were critical to participants' growth. In order to be sure that this evolution was authentic, participants were encouraged to assess new attributes by blind 360-degree feedback (using Survey Monkey) among peers outside as well as their support community within this workshop.

Last, it was necessary for participants to get past the "I am in a rut" stories. The stories indicated resignation and/or lack in interest whenever it came to diverging upon then creating a new future. This will is known as the initial purge of data. These were the stories participants needed to share so that we (as a group) could glean specific challenges from the data shared, and then work out solutions for these issues so as to effectively get past them. According to J. Michael Fox, senior faculty at the International Center for Studies in Creativity, resilience is when participants begin, "Looking at failure as the single most important thing to success." In fact, according to Dr. Puccio, the notion of trial and learn is a vital component to thinking creatively.

Data

There are several instruments available, but none that cater exclusively to this type of study. Therefore, one would have to be built in order to elicit responses that fit the workshop criteria. The types of instrumentation that could be used are an assessment of resilience and an interview protocol. Said instruments will measure resiliency and the change in resiliency. Because the instrument has yet to be developed, the number of items on the assessment of resiliency, and how it will be scored is to be determined. However, 5-10 items will be used to measure change in resiliency, and a change in reaction to trauma will be used to interpret the change. An instrument will have to be developed to ensure validity and reliability. Analysis will be used to check for internal

consistency and stability. For validity, investigators will research the construct of resilience.

To summarize data, frequency polygons, mean, median, and standard deviation descriptive statistics will be used. A dependent samples t-test will be used for comparison of averages, pre- and post- testing, and any relationships found would be fully described. Researchers will check data to make sure it's accurate, and deal with any discrepant cases or outliers prior to, data analysis. The study will use quantitative variables that have a continuous distribution; therefore a parametric technique will be used. The t-test is a significance test appropriate for inferential statistics. Calculating confidence intervals for the t-test will give a more accurate result, and range. A purposive sample will be used because researchers will be screening for low-SES Black males-only.

Summary

The Creative Resilience workshop is designed to assist black males from a low socio-economic status background increase their resiliency when faced with traumatic life experiences. The CPS tool will support the increase of resiliency through an intensive six-week workshop series. Here the participants will use different methodologies to creative positive chain reactions by developing positive peer relations, role-playing, vibe sessions and increasing self-efficacy. Community leaders and professionals will serve as reinforcement by sharing their personal stories of trauma and struggle. Highlighting the paradigm shift in their way of thinking to foster a positive impact on their families and communities.

Additionally, this workshop will also offer the participants the tools and language to transition into the workplace and immediately use their professional skills. Creative problem solving is a necessity and many employees lack this trait. The nurture and nature of this workshop is cutting edge and it offers black men from a low socio-economic status background with an opportunity to stack the deck in their favor. Devising a constructive and creative way to handle the trials and learns of everyday life with an effective tool.

Conclusion

This project asserted that creativity and creative problem solving skills would aid in resilience and leadership skills with low-SES Black males. An initial workshop was held to gather preliminary data on the efficacy of creativity training. This preliminary data will be used to develop a series of modules for resilience enhancement. The foreseen limitations of this study are participants will be subject to the trauma, stress, and violence they've been privy to all along. This will affect the recidivism rate by participants dropping-out due to worldly issue that they feel cannot be covered in this workshop. However, a $20 gift-card will be allotted, from any grants received, as an incentive to participants continuing in the workshop. Also, we do not-yet-know if this workshop will indeed enhance the participants' resiliency in daily endeavors.

Results of this study could be generalized for similar workshops with similar participants. Researchers would support their claims with noted assurances such as, developing study methods carefully, planning workshops to bring about change, using direct quotes from interviews to support results, also-make audio/video recordings of

workshop sessions. Inferential statistics could be limited by subjects that are overwhelmed by burdens happening outside of the one-day Creative Problem Solving training session that occurs once a week for six weeks. The major challenge I foresee is getting individuals to stay in closed sessions for the full six weeks. Due to this, researchers may not find a significant difference in pre- and post- testing. This paper proposes that low-SES Black males exercise an exceptional order of CPS ability to gradually increase resiliency.

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Appendix A

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Appendix B

Creative Resilience Workshop

Creative Resilience

CRUCIAL 21ST CENTURY WORKPLACE & ENTERPRISING SKILLS

- Do you want to bounce-back?
  - Do you like your life?
- Do you want to make it better?

Learn integral life skills that will make you a Phoenix in the face of trauma and struggle.

What's In It For Me?

In a recent Bloomberg/BusinessWeek study, job recruiters identified Creative Problem Solving among the top 5 skills for success. It also says that Resilience is a top-rated skill for effective leadership. Sadly, the same recruiters said Creative Problem Solving was the second most difficult skill to find among job applicants; to add, 46 percent of new hires fail in the first 18 months and 89 percent of them failed for attitudinal reasons. Numerous studies agree, in today's fast changing and volatile work environment, creative thinking and resilience are two of the most crucial skills for professional success.

Phoenix Innovation Group specializes in coaching, consulting, and facilitating creativity and resilience. This 2-hour, hands-on presentation is designed to provide participants with a proven set of principles and tools for enhanced creative problem solving and leadership skills that will be immediately applicable back in the workplace.

REGISTER @ http://www.linkedin.com/in/najja-bouldin-85182a8b

mailto:phoenixinnovationgroup@gmail.com

Chase Hall, Room 109 | Buffalo State | International Center for Studies in Creativity

Questions to get them to talk about their issues
Instructions: To be used when prompting participants to see that they're valid and bigger than their problems.

Goal/wish/challenge statements.

Do you want to bounce-back?
Do you like your life?
Do you want to make it better?

1st: Initial purge of data. 1 ½: What do you wish for?
2nd: g/w/c using language of thinking skills model
3rd: Allow for incubation. -Kube (Psychologist)

Questions to get them talking about issues: (Many people see that they have no worth. These questions are to show that they are worth everything)
1. What's been on your mind lately?
2. How come?
3. Tell me something good about what happened to you today?
4. Tell me about something that went really wrong today?
5. What would you like to do more of?
6. What would you like to do less of?
7. What would you like to do differently?
8. If you had a magic wand and you didn't have to worry about things like money, and the laws of physics-what would you wish for? (Doesn't matter if it's big or little, it's just getting them to talk).

Primary criteria: Things that are esoteric; knowledge based off of culture and what we've been exposed to.
Secondary criteria: Stuff that we overtly use. "It's too expensive!" "I don't have the time!" Things that we haven't been exposed to.

Bouldin, N.   11/14/2017

Creative Teleportation

This activity has the power to bestow the ability of teleportation. However, this ability is fueled by your creativity. Follow these simple instructions and you'll be teleporting like a superhero in no time.

Instructions:

Open your mind, suspend judgment, and embrace novelty while getting wild and weird with your imagination.

You're just about on your way, but first we need to gauge your creativity fuel.

What is teleportation?
- The act or process of moving an

   object by <u>psychokinesis</u>.

What is psychokinesis?
- Movement of physical objects by the

   mind without use of physical means.

What's intriguing about Creativity?

_____

_____

Are you creative? What's interesting about your creativity?

_____

_____

Think back to the 1st question. If you could use your understanding of creativity for anything, what might that look like?

_____

_____

In what ways might you be stifling your creativity?

_____

_____

You are now outfitted for your very own "beam me up Scotty" rendition. Here what the rest of this activity will look like. Creativity teleportation transcends time. Imagine that you've teleported to your life a year from now. Before teleportation your creativity skills had been enhanced. What might your life look like?

_____

_____

_____

Using your creativity skills, what might be all the ways to take full- advantage of teleportation?

_____

_____

In what ways might you use creativity to power you new ability?

_____

_____

Go back in the time with your creativity skills [or lack thereof]. What might/might not you change? Why/why not?
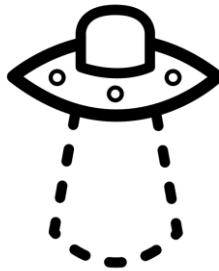
_____

_____

Creative Resilience

Teleport through out your timeline. What effect might creativity/creativity skills have in your life?
(Feel free to draw pictures to your description).

Before

After

_____

_____

_____

Congratulations! You're almost ready to teleport with the pros! Now you need to dig a little deeper in order to take your new abilities home with you. **Concentrate**. Dig deep into your imagination. You've teleported to a place where creativity is embraced. Studied even! The inhabitants call themselves Creatives. They say, "We live in a bubble of creative possibility." With you as an asset, how might you and your new team impact change in the world?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Creativity Workshop Feedback
Your feedback is important to us. Please take a few minutes to respond to the following questions. For the first four questions please use the 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) scale to circle the number that best represents your opinion. Then, please provide some brief comments to the two open-ended questions. Thank you.

1. **This workshop provided me with principles and tools that will enhance my creative-thinking skills.**

     1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
   Strongly   **Strongly**
   disagree   **agree**

2. **I found the information about *FourSight* preferences, both my individual creative thinking and others' preferences, useful.**

     1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
   Strongly   **Strongly**
   disagree   **agree**

3. **I will be able to apply much of what I learned in this workshop in my professional life.**

     1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
   Strongly   **Strongly**
   disagree   **agree**

4. **The workshop facilitator(s) were effective in delivering the content of the workshop.**

     1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
   Strongly   **Strongly**
   disagree   **agree**

5. **The most valuable aspects of this workshop were…**

6. **To improve the workshop I would recommend…**

Pre-Training Survey

How easy or difficult do you find it to present yourself as:

1. a creative person?

　　　　Extremely Hard　1　2　3　4　5　6　7　8　9　10　Extremely Easy

2. a resilient person?

　　　　Extremely Hard　1　2　3　4　5　6　7　8　9　10　Extremely Easy

3. an emotionally-intelligent person?

　　　　Extremely Hard　1　2　3　4　5　6　7　8　9　10　Extremely Easy

4. an inspirational person?

　　　　Extremely Hard　1　2　3　4　5　6　7　8　9　10　Extremely Easy

5. a person who is methodical?

　　　　Extremely Hard　1　2　3　4　5　6　7　8　9　10　Extremely Easy

6. a leader?

　　　　Extremely Hard　1　2　3　4　5　6　7　8　9　10　Extremely Easy

7. a person in leadership?

　　　　Extremely Hard　1　2　3　4　5　6　7　8　9　10　Extremely Easy

8. a professional person?

　　　　Extremely Hard　1　2　3　4　5　6　7　8　9　10　Extremely Easy

9. as a problem-solver?
               Extremely Hard   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Extremely Easy

10. as a change agent in your press (environment)?
               Extreme Hard   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Extremely Easy

11. as a visionary that sets challenging goals?
               Extreme Hard   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Extremely Easy

Answer the following questions to the best of your ability.
12. What do you expect to learn about creativity?

13. What do you expect to learn about problem solving?

14. What do you know about resilience?

15. How might your creativity be different from others'?

16. In what ways have problem-solving effected/impacted your resilience?

17. What are your core values?

18. Three characteristics of a leader?

Appendix C

Negative Peer Relations/Positive Peer Relations (NPR/PPR)
Frequency Evaluation Tool

Date:

Name:

NPR/PPR
FREQ EVAL TOOL

—————   —————   —————   —————   —————

NPR   ## PPR

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Write a short narrative (3-5 sentences) on how you have evaluated your day [positive/negative].

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix D

(Appendix D is an excerpt from author's philosophy of creativity essay, submitted as a requirement for CRS 635 Creativity and Change Leadership)

Author's note: The following is the philosophy paper that drove this inquiry and project.

       The man I am today is reflective of creatively inspired actions implemented to adapt and then thrive. The environment I grew up in was an experiential one of trauma, lack of sustenance and stabilization issues… one with no known solution, or as Dr. P puts it, no options in sight. I was raised in broken homes with no support, monetary intelligence or simple affectionate advice. Ever since I could remember creative problem solving has shown me how to cope and adapt in a chaotic environment by expanding my cognition in order to create positive and productive outcomes.

       In detail, from as far as I can remember, I was three years old and my brother and I lived with our crack-addled mother. The horrors we witnessed, to us, were conventional because we were naïve and didn't know any better. Besides, it wasn't like many around us were living anything different. Things like seeing our mother turn tricks for drugs, "powder" her nose, rats tunneling through our bread, and eating from government surplus which at that time could be found at local food pantries, and having the chicken pox and measles and ringworm at the same time demanded that we grow, and quickly. Because our fathers (who both had several other children that-at the time we knew nothing of) weren't around and there weren't any immediate role model(s) to teach us the correct way to maintain a life for a family, we were required to learn from what we experienced. As things became harder, my mother decided to leave us behind to pursue

her drug habit. Under those circumstances, the courts decided it would be best if my brother went to live with his paternal grandparents (because his father had been jailed) and that I go and stay with my biological father. Without explanation our lives would immediately turn upside down. My brother was my life, and now life was changing, but change doesn't always mean for the better. At this time my dad had a live-in girlfriend and "active" parent of her own [two] children: a girl and boy, six and eight years my senior. There would be times that my dad wouldn't come home for weeks. When asked about my father's whereabouts, his then girlfriend (now my step-mom) had informed me that she "kicked" my father out of our home. It wasn't until later that I found out that she hadn't booted him, and that dad worked as a Ballast Operator for CSX (then Conrail), which placed him in different cities week to week. Depending on which city and its approximation to Buffalo, paired with the fact that dad only had two days off, it sometimes didn't make sense fiscally to travel back and forth to and fro Buffalo.

Eventually, my father would return home as if nothing had happened. Perplexed and exhausted from anxiety caused by my ever-changing ecosystem, I would ask where he'd been. He'd then calm me and say, "I was working son!" I told him what I had been told by his girlfriend, and he'd laugh it off to say, "I ain't going no-where! This my house." That comforted me, until he left again, and this time it might be a month before we'd see each other again. Prior to moving in with my father, I don't recall memories of bonding time with him. I couldn't complain though, for it was much more than my other siblings got at that time. My dad is a great man, perhaps on of the greatest I know, just lacking in the dad department. While dad was away, I would suffer many abuses, from mental, verbal, and even sexual. I remember being called retarded for being hyperactive;

trifling for having dirty socks, and bald-headed bitches whenever my stepmom got

blitzed to the point I looked and sounded like my father. I remember eating cereal while

others ate four course breakfasts. I also remember the terror I felt whenever left alone

with my now step brother. It wasn't the first time I had been molested by anyone. My

mom's cousin stole our innocence much sooner. If this wasn't enough, by the time I

would see my 'pop' again word would have already reach him of how much of a menace

I had been in school and at home. Well, all I'll say to this is, my jaw still pops from the

trauma it endured.

It didn't take long before I began to realize that my world would remain a

constant, and that I'd need to be insistently creative and/or inspired in order to keep up

with it. Also, I learned that if I were to have any advantage(s) in life that it would be a

product of my direct effort(s); and, that it would take positive growth and creative

problem solving to ensure self-reliance and resilience. I found myself alone more often

as I grew; I was always different and a little more sensitive and aggressive than most

kids. Due to the exhaustive atmosphere of the lower-East Side of Buffalo I tended to

gravitate more towards books, reading the dictionary on the toilet, comics, all kinds of

music and watching television in closed caption to feed my autodidactic hunger. These

things gave me a fantastical escape from the peril I addressed almost daily. I also found

myself not wanting to deal with friends because they would have both of their parents, or

parents that loved them enough to love me-to where I was free to come over their houses

to eat. This kept up-until I'd wear that out my welcome and parents got tired of seeing

me, of course. In reference to the creative change model, I was the person that had to

change constantly, and efficiently. My inspiration to maintain a lifestyle had to start with

trying to alleviate struggle for myself and for my family. "Always strive to find a better one and continue until you have one that is still better" (Michalko, 2011). I began to hustle throughout the neighborhood by shoveling snow, mowing lawns, painting houses, and recycling cans. I knew I could sell drugs, but that had been the occupation for what seemed like everyone else in my generation. Besides, my brothers had vowed to break me up good if I had touched the stuff. Hustling gigs in my hood was a way of enhancing my skills and knowledge to have more of a positive environment. I was able to change my home environment because, I could afford to pay the rent my step-mom demanded to fund her gambling habits-whenever I had a gig; also, assist with my own food while other money could assist with paying for necessities; such as, toiletries, gas money, etcetera. Later, I would use this same ambition to purchase school clothes and supplies by picking up a job in a supermarket. I began to adapt to this aspect for every facet of my life because I wanted to achieve everything I desired. With things always changing so rapidly my divergent thinking process was always working to pump out ideas to proverbially – "hit the ground running". Naturally, I'd then converge on the best options available for me to see through whatever practices I started, to eat and survive in these streets.

Moreover, I had issues with connecting my education to the environment around me: the streets. It was a must to find creative inspiration in everything to stay motivated-and transform from everyday struggles to uphold a productive life. When I reached my teenage years, it seemed as if life moved faster by the day! You wouldn't know it by looking at me, but my confidence was hanging on by a frayed thread. This built anger and a nasty disposition I wanted someone else to feel for a change. Yet, it still took being

stabbed in the head with a screwdriver, being shot at, being abused and brought home by

police (which seemed like a rite of passage for all young men in my family), and facing

expulsion for inciting a mini riot in high school, before I started trusting change. In fits

of rage I would resort to illicit activity in the streets. However, I had the drive to go

towards anything I put my mind to, just didn't know what to put it to. Consequently, my

perspective of this environment processes as a challenge, instead, so much, a negative

environment. Although this much is true, the change in perspective motivates my

creative problem-solving process to focus more on ways out, versus ways of getting by. I

know I deserve better! I had to transform myself from the street hustle thought process

into an artistic, inventive, transcendent and productive thought process. Thinking that

produced options! In the streets one is faced with constant doubt, even in the closet loved

ones. In school, there are always formulas to certainty-I know what comes next; much

different from the death, destruction, and PIC that are ubiquitous where I come from.

This was naturally the next step in my personal evolution if I hadn't decided to pay

attention to the lives of those around me that were winning. Out of everyone that was

winning considerably, academia (of many sorts) was instrumental to getting her or him

there. So in 2007, two years fresh home from serving in Operation Enduring Freedom

and Operation Iraqi Freedom, I took my first class at Erie Community College, City

Campus, and once I tasted scholastic success I craved it! As a result, I developed an

insatiable hunger for higher education and transition. However, this novel lifestyle

wasn't without opposition and distraction. The streets were in my ear again, and the

sudden scholastic successes made me feel like I could pile-up the courses to finish my

Bachelor's Degree sooner. I failed to equate my academic life (which at this point had

moved on to the University at Buffalo) with my personal and business life resulting in me witnessing how fast success, too, can change. I moved out the hood only to have my loft apartment broken into, on the day I find out my girl had a miscarriage. Damn! I lost laptops, a few personal effects, a shotgun, but most importantly my peace of mind. That situation could've proved deadly for one of us if I had returned minutes sooner. I had to put my faith into God and restore confidence in myself. I did not want to be turned away or denied of a promising future. My plan was to execute all resources the college provided to create a time-budget plan, a schedule for study time and rigorous abuse of office hours to assist with any difficulty I had in a class, also, education could afford me leniency in front of the right judge. That was my way of exploring ideas to make a better situation out of a terrible one in my college experience. I made sure to formulate solutions to each problem I faced in the difficult semester so it would never happen again. Through diligence and good ole perseverance I immediately turned things around and graduated with cords. Although things looked up, again, it wouldn't take long for another obstacle to occur in my life, for now-I had an issue with finding gainful employment.

As a result of not finding a job, I hustled harder so I could create my own business and beat the buzzing criticism of why'd I even go to school in the first place! I created a vending machine company that services a few small businesses on the East Side of Buffalo. I formulated a plan for just college alone, and went above my expectations by creating my own lane of employment. I follow what other trailblazers have done-create something that I can, not only call my own, but also be a positive conduit for the World community. For example Steve Jobs was able to invent a product that was simple,

innovative, and necessary. Steve Jobs famously declared, "Creativity is just connecting things." Although we think of inventors as dreaming up breakthroughs out of thin air, Mr. Jobs was pointing out that even the most far-fetched concepts are usually just new combinations of stuff that already exists. Stories of greats like Harriet Tubman and Steve Jobs have always helped me stay focused while working my own struggles in a life with business. Harriet Tubman, convinced that chattel slavery wasn't what she was born to be, had a fervent yearning for freedom, even if it meant leaving everything she knew and loved behind; even worst, spelled a horrifying death if captured. Humph! I know I stand on the shoulders of giants.

Years ago, I found one of the surplus cans of stewed pork I used to eat as a child at my sister's grandmother's house. I have kept it with me since as a mark of inspiration for where my life has traveled since childhood. I was able to breakthrough difficult living situations. I was able to explore my vision, and as I've grown I started to see that life did not have to be so difficult, and with hard work and dedication life will be as I dreamt. Since a "youngin'" there were constant challenges formulating struggle in my life, like working as a young boy to help my family and alleviate social ills. I had the benefit of serving my country to thwart me into manhood. Also, I have the true honor of becoming a Graduate student of Creativity and Change Leadership (with all you greats). I am the rose that grew through concrete. I am the savage from the invisible badlands and third worlds of the New World. I am a wavering oak tree in this malevolent maelstrom we call life, and in the eye of this storm you witness the beauty of my resilience. Each issue I am confronted with I will be able to create ideas to stay inspired and find solutions that are positive and conducive to not only my life, but to the lives of

those around me (i.e., my baby boy). I am committed to a life of learning and growth.

The struggle with finding a career after completing my degree from the University at

Buffalo was the hardest to accept. In creating my own way to eat I was able to shatter

this perceived wall. It takes hard work, but struggle forced me into something that

creates income and happiness. Successes, or silver linings after torrential downpours are

what keep me inspired to strive for a greater legacy. Rainbows remind me of this! I

refuse to take what's offered. I know this might be more than what the assignment called

for, but it's cathartic for me. So, now we now nothing real can be threatened, and

nothing unreal exists (like worry, and fear) because if we continue to practice it right,

Creativity fashions us an unassailable armor. My offering for a definition of Creativity is

as follows: Every one of us is born with pure imagination; such imagination-breeds us

charming creativity. Within this creativity we forge/invent options, and in these options

we find unrelenting freedom. In the words of the late great Muhammad Ali, "I know

where I'm going and I know the truth, and I don't have to be what you want me to be.

I'm free to be what I want." Thank you to my illustrious colleagues and Creativity

Family [air hug]. Peace!