

Researcher examines hope among children in Flint, Michigan

October 11 2017, by Christie Delfanian



Examining children's hopes in Flint, Michigan, will help enhance school- and community-based programs. Credit: South Dakota State University

Nurturing hope with children is important.

Research shows that hope contributes to a person's resiliency and well-being, buffering against adversity, according to assistant professor Christin Carotta of the South Dakota State University Department of Counseling and Human Development. That's the impetus behind a study identifying the hopes of elementary school children in Flint, Michigan.

By examining children's experiences with hope, Carotta and her research team seek to enhance school- and community-based programs for children in low-income communities. The study was done in collaboration with Carotta's colleagues at Michigan State University, where she was a postdoctoral researcher before coming to SDSU in fall 2016.

"We wanted to further explore children's internal dialogues with feeling hopeful or less hopeful about desired outcomes in low-income communities," she explained. The researchers interviewed 21 children, 9 to 12 years old, who attend a community center that serves youth in Flint, Michigan. The interviews were completed three months before problems with lead in the drinking water were nationally publicized, Carotta pointed out.

The team used an inductive, qualitative approach to identify common themes that emerged from the children's narratives on hope. The study results are published in the September issue of *The Qualitative Report*.

"Children expressed a number of interrelated hopes, but they placed particular importance on their hopes of helping others, including providing for their families and aiding others in the community, particularly the poor and homeless," Carotta explained.

Children also emphasized their hopes for academic achievement and career building, as avenues through which they could gain the [financial stability](#) needed to help others. However, Carotta noted, children felt

uncertain that their hopes for academic success, rewarding careers and financial stability would actualize.

This study adds to what is known about children's personal experiences with hope in low-income communities. "The findings can enhance school- and community-based programming so they further align with the specific hopes that children have and are attune to the areas in which children in impoverished communities are most in need of [hope](#)-engendering strategies," Carotta explained. "Strengthening [children's](#) locus of control in these areas may promote more hopeful thinking about the future and support positive outcomes in the face of adversity."

Provided by South Dakota State University

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