

A little princess by
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A Little Princess by Frances Hodgson Burnett This research paper will examine and explain how imaginative play via storytelling, doll play or other similar objects provide children an avenue to act out coping skills. By examining this thought, I will help to explain that “ Children who live in supportive environments and develop a range of coping strategies become more resilient (DeBord: 2004). ” This research paper will answer the question with a focus on resilience and coping: “ Do children who play pretend have higher coping skills than children who do not play pretend? The main character, Sara, in the story A Little Princess starts out in a supportive environment while living in India with her father, Captain Crewe. Sara’s father bought a doll especially named Emily as a special gift before leaving Sara to carry out his military assignment. After Sara is left in the care of Miss Minchin, Select Seminary for Young Ladies, her supportive and emotional environment¹ in London drastically changes, especially upon being told of her father’s death and loss fortune. Sara encounters a very distressful situation as her social status changes into servant girl in lieu of being thrown out to the streets.

Typically, childhood stress or can be caused by any situation that requires a person to adapt or change such as death, moving, and or abuse. ² Sara exercises her own set of positive coping strategies (doll play and imagination) throughout the story to bounce back in spite of her modified living environment. By adjusting to change, Sara was still able to remain and acknowledged by others as A Little Princess. Doll Play as a form of Coping Stover and Berkowitz³ stated that “ children as young as 2 years of age have

the ability to mentally represent and utilize pretend play to signify actual or imagined events” (708).

In the story *A Little Princess*, Sara Crewe uses her creative imagination skills which resiliently play an important role when Miss Minchin relegates her to servitude and over time she manages to adjust to her changed environment. Sara’s use of storytelling, doll play and imagination are identified coping strategies throughout the book. Additionally, what Sara initially believes as magic from the obvious efforts of Mr. Carrisford and Ram Dass made living easier in the attic for both her and Becky. Sara “ pretends” with her doll, Emily.

The imaginative discussions with Emily and storytelling help Sara get through the hardships she experienced. Sara utilizes Emily as an outlet for her feelings; therefore, the doll became a coping mechanism incorporated into her new environment. According to Cole and Pierce (2007), the role of doll play supports the child’s coping skills in the face of trauma or post-trauma such as when Sara is told of her father’s death. Cognitive-behavioral⁴ or child-centered play therapy is similarly observed in the story by how Sara’s views herself in relationship to others and in the imaginary dialogue she holds with Emily.

Knell (1997) explains that cognitive-behavioral play therapy is psycho-educational in nature. However, the [self] learning experiences designed to bring about cognitive and behavioral changes are associated through play activities. This play can be through the use of both verbal and nonverbal forms of communication. For example when trying to calm herself down, “

One of [Sara's] "pretends" was that Emily was a kind of good witch who could protect her" (Burnett 97). The assumption of child-centered play therapy is that there is a relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Sara's modified environment influences her perceptions and behaviors. One of these cognitive areas described is observed when Sara, being already hungry, finds a piece of silver fourpence and then goes to the baker woman to buy buns. Yet, Sara saves just one for herself only to give all five away to a beggar child. Burnett narrates this notion of largest or demonstrated generosity Sara has in relationship to the beggar child: "" This," she said to herself, with a little sigh, " is one of the populace— and she is hungrier than I am. ""(124).

Another instance is when Sara accepts a coin given to her by Guy Clarence, but she realizes that doing so means she must " put her pride in her pocket" (95). Resilience and Coping " Research has expanded to focus on " educationally" or " academically" resilient children— those who succeed in school despite the stresses of poverty and inadequate childrearing conditions" (Kitano: 2005). Debord (2004) extensively discusses this concept of resiliency. 5 Despite the stresses of poverty and inadequate living conditions, Sara demonstrated her ability to generate positive coping strategies thus preserving her dignity.

Burnett provides the reader an understanding of resiliency when Sara says, " Whatever comes cannot alter one thing. If I am a princess in rags and tatters, I can be a princess inside" (108). What attributed to Sara's observed

resilience was her ability to find hope in thinking through her situations out of her imaginary discussions with Emily and her “suppose” critical thinking strategies. Relatively, a modern-day Sara would be considered as an at-risk youth. According to Kitano, a resilience approach would similarly serve especially well the needs of beggar children such as Anne or the house servant Becky of whom experienced hardship. At risk” would include gifted children such as Sara and youth living in poverty or in circumstances of abuse and neglect like Becky or Anne. Doyle (2001) suggests this similar idea that resilience improves conditions affecting an individual’s ability to cope, specifically surviving and coping with emotional abuse in childhood. It is suggested, however, many children who do not learn a set of positive coping strategies is the result of not having a supportive environment present (Debord: 2004). This instance is in the case for Becky whereas until Sara moves into the attic.

Sara becomes part of Becky’s supportive and emotional environment making things dually more pleasant as the story progresses. Intelligence and Resilience Sara’s acknowledged intellect does appear to play a role in resilience. According to Werner, it is observed that not all resilient children are unusually gifted or talented but that “at least average intelligence” [for Sara Crewe was an avid reader] (123). Kitano makes reference in her work regarding Warner’s thought: Even though there is little evidence that high intelligence alone promotes more effective coping, most longitudinal studies of resilient children and youth report that intelligence (especially communication and problem-solving skills) and scholastic competence (especially reading skills) are associated positively with the ability to

overcome adversity (Werner, p. 122). Burnett's narrations include various instances describing how Sara's thought processes are similarly used to console her, initially mentioning through reading of books. A first glance at this concept is when Sara tells her father that "if she had plenty of books she could console herself" in lieu of feeling sad and lonely away from each other (Burnett 5).

Another example demonstrating Sara's coping ability was Burnett's soliloquy that allowed Sara's thoughts to be conveyed to the reader (and to her doll, Emily): "As to answering, though," said Sara, trying to console herself, "I don't answer very often. I never answer when I can help it. When people are insulting you, there is nothing so good for them as not to say a word— just look at them think...When you will not fly into a passion people know you are stronger than they are, because you are strong enough to hold in your rage, and they are not, and they say stupid things they wish they hadn't said afterward.

There's nothing so strong as rage, except what makes you hold it in— that's stronger...Perhaps Emily is more like me than I am like myself..." (Burnett 97) Additionally, Kitano provides insight on resilience information agreeing that Sara's above average intellectual development support her defined coping abilities as being resilient, which make Sara's coping strategies an important personal quality in her character. To reiterate, Knell (1997) says that cognitive-behavioral play therapy is psycho educational in nature. The imaginative dialogues are important in resilience.

Sara's cognitive-behavior observed in the story is acknowledged by Kitano (2005) as "beyond its role in educational attainment, but the precise mechanism remains unclear." The majority of resilience literature in early childhood development does suggest that in the case of Sara Crewe's character, her intelligence plays a role as such an example "to positive outcomes among high risk children and youth, though alone it is insufficient" (Kitano: 2005). Environmental Factors in Developing Resilience Werner explores the thought regarding environmental factors.

Sara was able to generate coping strategies and developed her resilience over time through which she overcame many adversities living in the seminary. It is therefore understood that resilience "increases self-efficacy and confidence in one's ability to influence the environment" (Werner: 2000). Kitano harmonizes in thought understanding that "increasing cognitive maturation and life experiences that come with age support awareness of a greater range of coping strategies and the ability to analyze specific factors in a stressful situation and make effective choices" (2005).

Sara Crewe's character observably acquired a strong sense of autonomy and was able to effectively develop her coping abilities as a self-cognitive approach by means of re-assessing and re-adjusting to the trials she faced living in the seminary. One way of doing this was to pretend she "" had dry clothes on," she thought. "Suppose I had good shoes and a long, thick coat and merino stockings and a whole umbrella..." (Burnett 122). In this instance, Burnett does an excellent narrative telling how Sara's imagination plays an important role in getting her through being wet, hungry, and cold.

Sara's belief in magic is revived in this example when to her own surprise while she is pretending "to find a sixpence— which belonged to nobody," a fourpenny piece is actually found— "which belonged to nobody" (122). Social competence, problem solving, autonomy and sense of purpose are identified areas of personal strengths in Sara Crewe's character. 6 These internal assets contribute to the development of a child's resilience, which in the field of early childhood education is common familiarity to early educators (Benard: 2004). Empathy and a good sense of humor is observably demonstrated in Sara Crewe's character.

Sara always showed compassion even when accepting the sixpence from Guy Clarence. "[H]e looked so likely to be heartbrokenly disappointed if she did not take it, that Sara knew she must not refuse him. To be as proud as that would be a cruel thing" (Burnett 95). Burnett narrates how Sara realizes that accepting the coin meant she (Sara) must "put her pride in her pocket" (ibid.). Sara's sense of humor was an internal asset which her father loved most about her (Burnet 6). Being an avid reader attributed to developing Sara's humor in fostering her social competence.

According to Katz and McClellan (1997), humor helps children develop intellectually. Many early childhood professionals believe that humor is in fact a form of intellectual play, since language is the principal conduit for our thinking processes. Additionally, Sara's resourcefulness attributed to her coping abilities as a problem-solver. The character's innovativeness when Sara decorated "an old table covered with a red shawl and set with rubbish from a long-unopened trunk" (Burnett 147) was an example demonstrating

the ability to think critically, creatively, and reflectively according to Benard (2004).

As a result, Sara was able to exercise through her own set of positive coping strategies some control over her environment. Burnett provides the reader a clear understanding of Sara's autonomy. Maintaining dignity in servitude yet still a princess at heart is implied when Sara says, " If I am a princess in rags and tatters, I can be a princess inside...all the time when no one knows it" (108). Sara's belief in magic is renewed when the attic is mysteriously decorated while she is asleep (Burnett, " The Magic" 152). Yet, finding out that Mr.

Carrisford and Ram Dass are responsible for the transformation did not make Sara's surprising experience any less magical. Masten (2001) extensively explores the concept of magic relative to resilience processes in development. According to Masten's study, " What began as a quest to understand the extraordinary has revealed the power of the ordinary. Resilience does not come from rare and special qualities, but from the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children, in the families and relationships, and in their communities" (Masten 9).

Resiliency was all along part of Sara's inner self or genetic makeup as an individual. She was always optimistic and hopeful that her expectations for the future were good and positive outcomes would happen because of the Magic. Thus, resiliency is the norm— " ordinary magic" according to Masten — rather than the exception. Sara's belief, " Somehow, something always

happens just before things get to the very worst. It is as if the Magic did it... The worst thing never quite comes” (Burnett 145), is an example used for understanding what Masten is suggesting as ordinary magic.

Resilience in this instance exists when Sara demonstrates her ability to cope and when self-generated social and emotional supports are manifested (Emily, Becky, Ermengarde, Melchisedec, Ram Doss, etc.). Lastly, researchers have looked at what helps children manage difficult times when others have not acquired or learned a set of positive coping strategies. Resilience is essentially about the potential means of a person to deal with living in spite of stresses.

The ultimate idea of resilience is to foster children’s social competency through building their strengths that protect and promote well-being. Although Sara Crewe’s social and emotional environment in London drastically changed, the character uniquely finds innovative ways of stabilizing her living conditions. Burnett’s narrative story about Sara Crewe provides an illustrative point of view describing a resilient child, specifically one who could be considered as an at-risk youth surviving and coping with emotional abuse in childhood.

Additionally, further research has provided evidence that youth who live in distressful situations are not adversely affected as mainstream adults. These children grow up, are able to cope with living, care for themselves and others who have long term difficulties. One could believe that Sara Crewe has done the same if Burnett did write a sequel to A Little Princess. At the story’s conclusion, Sara wanted to ensure the care of hungry children by “ giv[ing]

buns and bread to the populace” (Burnett 190). Sara was able to make provisions for those who had long term difficulties as beggar children.

Sara plan as stated was, “ I could go to see the bun-woman, and tell her that if, when hungry children— particularly on those dreadful days— come and sit on the steps... she would just call them in and given them something to eat, and she might send the bills to me” (190). The story of “ Sara Crewe” is a powerful story told within it. Burnett communicates to the reader a message of courage simply understood in that some people not only face and overcome a difficult situation, but they can even be strengthened by it. Sara is such an individual, a resilient child. Concluding Thoughts

Early childhood educators, who promote the encouragement of fostering children’s social competence, contribute to educational resilience (Katz and McClellan: 1997). Kitano states that “[c]haracteristics supportive of resilience appear in early childhood”. She also adds that “[children] have good interpersonal skills and show signs of early coping strategies—planning how to manage what happen to them” (2005). It is imperative to acknowledge that “ an early care environment has a major role in a child’s development, affecting later outcomes and life chances” (Oates, 2007, viii).

Though there are a number of significant differences between parents and early childhood educators; conversely educators, like parents, are managing the emotional environment in which the children engage in daily activities, and by implication, we as their direct care provider are influential in their development. Being an early childhood development administrator who regularly monitors programming, the importance of the emotional

environment of the child care setting conducive to the child's development has long been recognized.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) published criteria for “ developmentally appropriate practices,” also known by early childhood educators as DAP, stress the central role of a positive emotional environment (Bredekamp & Copple: 1997). Early childhood programs have maintained a firm belief in the power of the early educator's input into the environment to induce emotionally positive states in children, to channel their emotion into learning, and to stimulate emotionally healthy development (Katz & McClellan: 1997).

One last early childhood glance standpoint is to realize that when children are placed at the core of several common elements or layers of influence, ranging from their immediate environments (school) to the philosophical beliefs that exist in their culture or way of life (home), it is these multiple relative layers that simultaneously work together to influence children's individual outcomes; thusly, modeling values for children whether in the family home or other emotional conducive environment.

In summary, the cited authors mentioned believe that children need to know they can make a difference in the world and are valued by those entrusted to provide their direct care in order to build a child's resilience. Children need to know that they are loved because of the individual position or place they have in the world. Sara was always told she was a princess, even when acknowledging to Miss Minchin she wasn't (financially) she said, “” I—tried

not be anything else, even when I was coldest and hungriest— I tried not to be”” (Burnett 182).

Sara humbly held on to that ‘ princess’ notion which helped her develop coping strategies in dealing with the subjected emotional abuse and neglect. She maintained a sense of optimism and persistent hope that her expectations for the future were good. Sara’s resilience demonstrated was even shown in creating a family (in all the many forms) supportive to her emotional environment. A final thought is that we must remember children are young human beings, and they are important as to what the future promises for them.

As early educators, the responsibility is to reinforce and foster children’s social competence through teaching them that their desires need only deferred if they interfere with those of other beings. What makes children a special case for further philosophical and early educational study is this combination of their humanity and a childhood perspective “... to express these views freely in all matters affecting the child” (United Nations: 1989, Article 12). Notes Emotional environment: According to the position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) under its Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment, acknowledges that those who work in the field of early childhood care and education “ have moral and ethical implications (2005). ” The ethical responsibilities to children in Section 1 are: “(Ideal-1. 5)-To create and maintain safe and healthy settings that foster children’s social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development and that respect their dignity and their contribution. ” [and] “(Principle-1.)-Above all, we shall not harm children. We <https://assignbuster.com/a-little-princess-by-frances-hodgson-burnett-assignment/>

shall not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children. This principle has precedence over all others in this Code. ” 2 Post-traumatic stress disorder (condition following trauma): a psychological condition affecting people who have suffered severe emotional trauma as a result of an experience such as combat, crime, death or natural disaster, and causing sleep disturbances, flashbacks, anxiety, tiredness, and depression (Cole & Pierce: 2007). Stover’s and Berkowitz’s research (Yale University Child Study Center) recognizes the existence of age-specific posttraumatic stress symptoms in infants, toddlers, and preschoolers while pointing out the importance of standardized assessment tools for violence exposure and trauma symptoms in young children. The authors suggest that “ inclusion of play observations and creation of observable and documentable behavioral criteria during the course of the evaluation should be key components for a thorough assessment” (708). Cognitive-behavioral play therapy is based on cognitive and behavioral theories of emotional development and disorder. CBPT is structured, directive, and problem-focused. CBPT involves the child in the treatment through play, using art materials, stuffed animals, puppets, and other toys. The child’s thoughts and feelings are the focus as the therapist provides a strategy for developing more adaptive behaviors and thoughts. Rather than being open-ended, CBPT is goal oriented, directive, and structured. Resiliency simply stated is the ability to bounce back from stress and crisis. Kitano and Lewis (2005) explore resilience describing it as the phenomenon of surviving and thriving in the face of adversity typically predictive of negative outcomes for example poverty, family

psychopathology, and trauma. They believe that development of resilience
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involves internal personality characteristics, coping strategies, and environmental factors. Benard (2004) defines these contributing internal assets to resilience development accordingly: (1) Social competence includes qualities such as responsiveness, especially the ability to elicit positive responses from others; flexibility, including the ability to move between different cultures; empathy; communication skills; and a sense of humor. (2) Problem-solving skills encompass the ability to plan; to be resourceful in seeking help from others; and to think critically, creatively, and reflectively. (3) Autonomy is having a sense of one's own identity and an ability to act independently and to exert some control over one's environment, including a sense of task mastery, internal locus of control, and self-efficacy. The development of resistance (refusing to accept negative messages about oneself) and of detachment (distancing oneself from dysfunction) serves as a powerful protector of autonomy. (4) Resilience is manifested in having a sense of purpose and a belief in a bright future, including goal direction, educational aspirations, achievement motivation, persistence, hopefulness, optimism, and spiritual connectedness.

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