

Community, Identity and Control as Keywords in Building Fortitude, Grit, and Flourishing through Positive Organizational Behavior: The Case of Finnish Music Classes

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Abstract

This research sought evidence for the claim (Haslam et al., 2009) that supportive *communities* are essential for the building of positive *identity* and feeling of *control* that nurture the social type of resilience. The study investigated the presence of these three elements in an educational context. The data were collected by mixed methods from two Finnish comprehensive schools, including 79 music class students (ages 9–13) and their teachers. The results revealed how the old music class tradition strengthened children’s trust and hope related to their goals. Elements that supported fortitude and a “zone of challenge and vulnerability” were identified and integrated into the grit model of Trust, Hope, and Love (Olander & Saarikallio, 2024a). The resulting model of positive education displays ideal conditions for fostering an educational process that builds personal growth and flourishing.

Introduction

This study examined whether the theory of fortitude could provide additional insight into understanding positive organizational behavior. Daisley (2022, p. 108) understands fortitude as a group phenomenon and resilience as a “manifestation of groups.” Luthans and Avolio (2014) studied positive organizational behavior—how psychological capital, hope, optimism, efficacy and resilience can be built in organizations. Seligman et al. (2009) designed various classroom interventions and established the field of positive education, which studies the potential of education to build not only skills but also happiness. This study integrated these traditions into an investigation that focused on music classes, as they have previously been identified as a space in which social support structures and personal passions unite (Tuomela, 2019; Olander & Saarikallio, 2024a).

In recent years, many educational reforms have been implemented in Finland. A new trend is to develop open learning environments, in which children no longer have their own desks or traditional schoolbooks and over 60 small children can form an enormous “class” (Saltmarsh et al., 2014). Learning is increasingly relying on autonomy, where students use laptops for self-directed work. This places significant demands on children’s still-developing self-control (Casey & Caudle, 2013). Adolescents’ grit (Guo et al., 2023) has weakened in most OECD countries, including Finland. Digitalization has shown its downside by contributing to the global youth mental health crisis (Haidt, 2024). In this situation, all resilience-related research has become immensely valuable.

Daisley (2022) used the concept of fortitude to refer to that type of resilience that develops through participation in a group. His ideas are much based on studies about social identity processes and their health-related outcomes (Haslam et al., 2005; 2018). Daisley’s review of a vast number of scientific studies gives examples of organizational behavior that actively builds *community*, *identity* and *control*, components that according to Haslam et al. (2018) build resilience. His model of fortitude offers concepts that are quite close to *relatedness*, *competence* and *autonomy*, elements of the basic psychological needs theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) that has offered a theoretical frame for numerous studies about the ways to activate intrinsic motivation and to enhance well-being in organizations (Broeck et al., 2016; Evans, 2015).

The current article is based on the idea of applying and testing this less-researched model of fortitude (Daisley, 2022) in the context of Finnish music education. We approached music class activity as organizational behavior, investigating whether its group processes and systemic structures could be understood considering Daisley’s model. The Finnish music class system has been largely immune to educational reforms because music classes form unique communities. They represent strengths-based learning, where music is used as a tool for

motivating children's overall learning. Children are admitted to their music class by passing a musical aptitude test and study all their school subjects together in the same class for seven years (3rd to 9th class). Music classes receive three to four music lessons each week and engage in goal-oriented activities, preparing for regular group performances as a choir, band, or orchestra. Because of their special educational culture, these classes have offered an interesting "laboratory" for this investigation. Could the decision makers better prevent children's anxiety, task avoidance and mental nausea if there were more research-based models that could build understanding about those principles that promote fortitude, flourishing and grit through positive organizational behavior?

Theories and Studies of Grit

Duckworth et al. (2007) defined grit as having two dimensions: passion and perseverance for long-term goals. Passion means consistency of interests. Perseverance refers to effort despite difficulties or obstacles. The concept of "musical grit" used in this article refers to a type of grit in which passion is targeted at music and music making. Studies show many benefits of grit, such as better performance (Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth, 2019) and elevated psychological well-being (Vainio & Daukantaite, 2016). Salmela-Aro and Upadyaya (2020) noted that high school students who showed high grit, curiosity, academic buoyancy, social engagement, and belongingness were likelier to be engaged in their studies rather than stressed or near burnout. Valdez and Datu's (2021) study detected connections between grit and well-being. Emotion regulation strategies, like cognitive reappraisal, helped maintain grit because they assisted individuals find an optimistic perspective, even gratitude, despite adversities (Valdez & Datu, 2021, p. 2–3).

The grit model of Trust, Hope, and Love (Figure 1) offers an educational perspective for grit as a phenomenon. Perseverance receives support from a combination of Received love (mental and material support from school and parents), Trust (feeling of having enough competence, resources and support for reaching the goals of learning), and growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). Passion receives support from Hope (personal interest and desire), Shared love and flourishing (PERMA-V based well-being in connection with sharing the results of the gritty work), and becoming me mindset (the long-term goal is coherent with the building of positive, authentic identity). (Olander & Saarikallio, 2024b.)

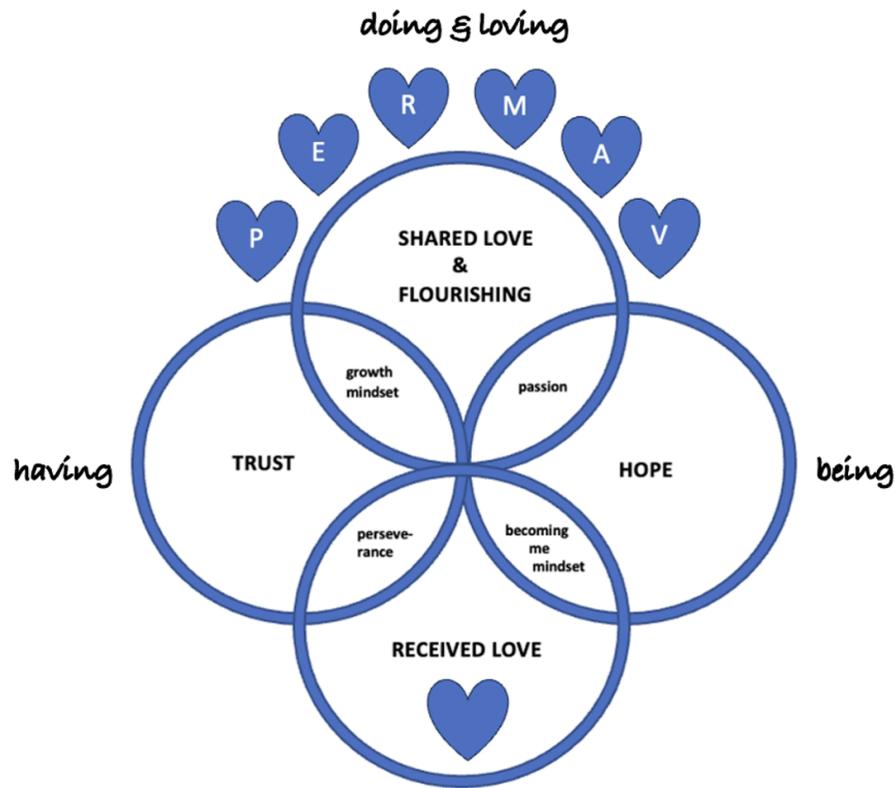


Figure 1. The grit model of Trust, Hope, and Love, THL (Olander & Saarikallio, 2024b), here with interpretation of the well-being function of its main components related to the theories of Allardt (1993) and Martela (2024) and PERMA-V = positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment and vitality (Seligman, 2011).

Our further investigations of the components of THL model indicated that children's years of playing (musical grit) correlated with "musical flourishing," which further correlated with self-efficacy (GSE), general flourishing (well-being), and the prevalence of flow experiences. The perseverance of music class students was higher compared to the control group. When students wrote about their music-related challenges, their descriptions tended to reflect high optimism and resilience. Detecting these many positive potential transfer effects from intensive, long-term music studies led to highlighting aspects such as flow, fortitude, and social-emotional skills as benefits of intensive music education. (Olander & Saarikallio, 2024a; 2024b.) However, these studies did not explain the elements that build and maintain fortitude.

Fortitude—The Social-Identity Explanation of Resilience—And the Elements That Build It

Resilience refers to the ability to bounce back and return even stronger after facing adversities or personal setbacks (Stoverink et al., 2020). Haslam et al. (2005) underlined the collective aspect of resilience as a “manifestation of groups and of individuals as group members” (Daisley, 2022, p. 108). Based on Haslam (2005) and supported by numerous studies, Daisley (2022) listed three elements essential in building fortitude, a special type of resilience that gets its force from participating in groups with shared interests: *control*, *identity*, and *community*.

Control: An Element That Builds Fortitude

According to Daisley (2022) *control* is one of the three cornerstones of fortitude. He states that participation, or a sense of agency, means control in group work. Creative expression has also been noted to produce a sense of control. (Daisley, 2022, p. 111–134.) Control has been connected with optimism, reduced stress, and better health (Darvill & Johnson, 1991). According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), the feeling that everything is totally under control is typical of the flow experience. Engagement or flow belongs to those experiences that, according to the PERMA well-being theory (Seligman, 2011), produce human flourishing (Figure 1). There are already many studies that have used the PERMA model to evaluate well-being experiences caused by music (Acenso et al., 2018; Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2020; Croom, 2015; Lee et al., 2017; Schmid, 2024; Olander & Saarikallio, 2022; 2024a). Haden (2018) understands that building skills and acquiring control also means building of identity. “At first you play a guitar, but in time you think of yourself as a musician. The same is true in any pursuit; in time you *become* the thing you do.” (Haden, 2018, p. 35.)

Identity: An Element That Builds Fortitude

Identity, or self, according to Mead (1934, p. 135), develops “in the process of social experience and activity” and has a strong role in building fortitude (Daisley, 2022, p. 137). According to Bandura (2000), perceived collective efficacy fosters groups’ motivational commitment. People shape their behavior by estimating what their groups value, so social identity sets the basis for building individual identity (Bandura, 2000). Also, forming a coherent life story and having a positive narrative of oneself has been understood to build self-esteem (Bauer et al., 2008) and benefit the process of building positive identity (Daisley, 2022, 138–143).

According to Marcia’s (1994) identity theory, people first adopt their identity in childhood. Later in life, many start seeking an identity that feels authentically theirs. Many people seem willing to put much effort and energy into long-term goals that build their desired identity. becoming me mindset (Figure 1) is a concept that we created to display that tendency. Many studies have detected the link between grit and the process of building one’s identity.

Weisskirch's (2019) study showed that identity development mediated the relationship between grit and well-being. Vainio and Daukantaite (2016) found a connection between grit and psychological well-being, satisfaction with life, and harmony in life, while the sense of coherence and authenticity were important mediators.

Community: An Element That Builds Fortitude

Belonging to groups and sociability form the key element of being human. Vaillant (2012) noticed that belonging to groups and having social connections benefited mental health and made people happier and more resilient. In the prehistory of our ancestors, isolation put people in mortal danger. In the modern era, groups with a shared purpose are more coherent and committed (Eriksen et al., 2017; Kiang et al., 2020). For example, drumming, singing, and making music together build connections with others and create a sense of community. Also, people who have felt isolated can reconnect and feel they are part of something shared and bigger. (Daisley, 2022, p. 188.) Learning music by participating in a supportive community has been shown to offer excellent opportunities for nurturing socio-emotional skills (Saarikallio, 2019), which have been noted to have a connection with resiliency (Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2020). According to Daisley (2022), community, along with control and identity, comprise the three pillars of fortitude. Could this theory provide insights into the elements that support positive growth in the context of art education?

Aim and Research Questions

More research-based knowledge is needed about the ways to build resilience through education and organizational behavior. Research questions include:

1. According to Daisley's model of fortitude (2022), the elements of identity, community and control build a communal type of resilience. In what ways, if any, might the Finnish music class tradition be interpreted as offering particular support for building those elements?
2. How can we better understand the development of grit and fortitude, especially in the case of children who excel in music but need support in other subjects?
3. What is the relationship between the fortitude model (Daisley, 2022) and other models and theories such as the grit model of Trust, Hope, and Love (Figure 1), basic psychological needs theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), the model of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2011) and vulnerability theory (Brown, 2012)? Is it possible to combine these various theories into a comprehensive model that illustrates an optimal educational process supported by positive organizational behavior, which in turn fosters the building of a good and fulfilling life?

Method

Phenomenology is about understanding human experiences and meanings as they appear in human reality (Metsämuuronen, 2009, p. 224). Data of this study were collected by using mixed methods of musical learning, teaching, performing experiences, and the supportive elements of the Finnish music class environments. This study was conducted as theory-based phenomenological research. This methodology involves a simple deductive analysis and evaluating whether the data fit in the already existing theoretical frame.

The current study evaluated whether all those three elements—identity, community and control—of the fortitude model (Daisley, 2022) could be detected from the data and whether there were signs that those elements assisted the development of community-based resilience.

Participants

This study's participants were from two different schools with music classes. All Finnish music classes follow the same curriculum basics, which offers much freedom for local features and specialties in music education. Commonly, pupils in traditional Finnish music classes study all their school subjects together and always have some shared musical performance goal (music class concert, school festivity, or school musical) to be well prepared for.

Table 1 lists the details of all those classes that joined this study from both schools. School 1 had students from highly multicultural backgrounds, representing 30 different nationalities. Many children with special needs studied in these music classes, and only about 20% of these children played some instrument as an extracurricular hobby before the Start Playing! project (2016–2022) that offered accessible playing lessons.

At School 2, for decades, all children had taken playing lessons during their music class studies based on the old music class traditions (Törmälä, 2013). At this elementary school, every music class maintained its own chamber orchestra. This school also maintained high-level choirs.

Data Collection

Data for the current study were collected in 2017 and 2020, using a mixed-methods approach, as part of a larger research project on music classes. Quantitative data were gathered to determine, if the responses of children who excelled in music but required support in other subjects, differed from those of other music class students. Qualitative data were collected to identify the external and internal factors that could possibly contribute to students' musical grit, fortitude, and overall well-being at school.

1. Children from four classes, totaling 79 students (Table 1), responded to various statements using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. The survey included statements such as: *I have a good ear for music, and I sing perfectly in tune; I am good at mathematics; Playing together with friends is fun!* etc.
2. Four teachers assessed every child's level of musical skills and other capacities (using a Likert scale of 1–5). The survey included statements such as: *How would you assess this child's musicality? How would you assess this child's skills in mathematics?*
3. Five teachers participated in semi-structured interviews about the possible benefits for the children from long-term music studies and playing in music class and about their ways of teaching music classes and their experiences of music class performances.
4. Children of 5th classes in both schools (42) wrote essays about their history of playing an instrument and their feelings about their music studies.
5. 16 voluntary children from 5th to 8th grade were interviewed about the same themes in 2020.

Table 1

Classes that participated in the data collection (May 2017)

Music education profile	Classes	Number of students	Number of responses	Children with support needs (% of responses)	Finnish as a second language (% of responses)
Start Playing! School 1	3rd	25	15	5 (33 %)	4 (26.7 %)
	4th	23	22	6 (27.3 %)	7 (31.8 %)
	5th	25	19	5 (26.3 %)	10 (52.6 %)
Orchestra, School 2	5th	24	23	0	0
Total		97	79	16	21

Interviews and writing tasks for the children were relatively free-form discussions and descriptions of music in their lives, their relationship with music, their playing history, feelings about their music studies, and their overall memories of music class times. Teacher interviews targeted teachers' experiences teaching music classes, the possible benefits they had observed that this type of activity might offer the children, and the reasons why.

Analysis

Analyses of this study were conducted using mixed methods with an emphasis on qualitative inquiry. Qualitative data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis (Metsämuuronen, 2009). The model of fortitude (Daisley, 2022, p. 109) served as a framework in which all the data were investigated. The analysis was meant to determine whether the traditional music class culture could support and build the key elements of that model: *control*, *identity*, and *community*, and a communal type of resilience.

The quantitative analysis focused on comparing children with different starting points. The guiding principle for the analysis was to provide a systemic understanding of fortitude as a phenomenon and evaluate whether the model of fortitude could offer some new perspective on previous theories related to grit and fortitude.

Results

The analysis identified elements of control, identity, and community within the data, demonstrating their capacity to build fortitude, grit, and a sense of flourishing through music learning in the context of music classes.

Music Class Studies in Building Fortitude through the Feeling of Control

Preparing for music class concerts made music class studies goal-oriented:

What first comes to mind is long-term work during the process. We have the goal to prepare those pieces for the concert and practice them studiously. That teaches perseverance and, of course, musical skills through using these pieces for learning and playing together. Basic skills are also learned—how people go to their performing places and how to behave onstage. Kids learn how to be prepared for the moment of performance. Those concerts are also very important in developing the spirit of relatedness. In every concert I have been to, I have seen how it lifts class spirit. Again, you could see how the kids flourished after they performed. They had accomplished their goal well, and that brought them a feeling of success. Of course, these concerts also give performance experiences. (Teacher, interview)

Music class concerts also educated children on punctuality and taking responsibility. Concert situations were very meaningful for the children, so they didn't want to give a bad impression of themselves or their class. These situations taught children how to take care of their part of the entity so that everything would be under control onstage:

One must be at the place at the right time. One has to remember to take their own equipment with them. That is all about responsibility. It is quite possible that a pupil walks in and says, "Teacher, I don't have a pencil," and that some exercises can

always be done, even without any equipment. That's the school nowadays: Even if somebody is lazy and neglects tasks, that person gets helped. However, in the case of concert performances, it goes so that if you don't take care of your tasks, you'll be onstage like being without pants—and that feels horrible... They don't want that, and by that, they learn about bearing responsibility. (Teacher, interview)

According to this teacher's experience, children also adopted appropriate behavior when they joined the group:

When one student from a preparatory class (classes for new immigrants learning Finnish) came to us in the fall, his grouping happened quickly. He immediately made friends, and his behavior changed from that of previous classes—restless and disruptive ... to listening to teaching and being responsible. He could work more independently as he kind of adopted the behavior culture of the group. (Teacher, interview)

Children in music classes experienced positive feelings in connection with their performances. Many children at both schools stated that performing had increased their self-confidence:

Successful musical performances make me feel more self-sure.
I have more trust in myself. (Students, essays)

Many children reported initially suffering from stage fright but not so much anymore. The most frequent answer was that performing increased positive images and emotions:

Performing is fun because it gives me a feeling that's just amazing. I'm pretty nervous before performing. (Student, essay)

Summary: Control

Students' music class concerts provide a clear, shared goal for practicing. According to our previous study (Olander & Saarikallio, 2024a), children in music classes tended to employ optimistic coping strategies and positive explanatory styles, as described by Seligman & Schulman (1986), when faced with challenges.

These strategies helped children to maintain their control—the important feeling of Trust. It could be interpreted that this happened because music was very meaningful for the whole group. The power of the group affected the fight or flight mechanism (Ebersöhn, 2014) such that the students didn't start to use avoidance mechanisms or become anxious so easily in the face of challenge (Figure 2).

Daisley (2022, p. 137) refers to Haslam et al. (2005) who concluded that the “strong sense of identity ... allows those who share it to cope with situations that to others might seem

intimidating or even impossible to cope with.” The children of music classes usually overcame their stage fright quickly and become brave performers. Many students reflected their learned industriousness (Eisenberger et al., 1976). They had internalized the relationship between intensified effort, hard work, and the positive result that got social reinforcement.

The feeling of competence, together with this social reinforcement, made students willing to step out of their own comfort zones a bit, if needed (Figure 2). According to Haslam et al. (2009), identity processes in which the group offers an individual a “sense of meaning, purpose and belonging” are beneficial, because they “tend to have positive psychological consequences.”

Children who studied at music classes could—despite performance excitement—find their fortitude and perform bravely. Taking this risk was often rewarded; the groups could get positive experiences of mastery (Bandura, 1978; 2000) and flow (i.e., feeling of control) that followed the period of hard work.

Music Class Studies in Building Positive Identity

The data contained examples highlighting the importance of music relating to a student’s interests and identity.

I fell in love with the sound of the drums and enjoyed playing them. We bought my drum set from my godfather, who is also a drummer. (Student, essay)

In School 1, many children had support needs. Teachers noticed the students’ difficulties in mathematics and language skills, their challenges in concentrating during the lessons, and how they benefited by adopting the enthusiastic learning attitude and culture of their music class.

Well, I believe they benefit much. When the rest of the group is quite skilled, it kind of inspires them to join. There are students in the group who give a good model. A good learning style, studying habits, and an enthusiastic learning attitude kind of enhance those students who are a little weaker and might otherwise join a group of disruptive students, but they can’t find one in our class. And then they’re in the group just like everyone else. (Teacher, interview)

The entrance tests measure only musicality, so many children in music classes also needed additional support. The Mann-Whitney U-test, based on the 2017 survey (which included claims rated on a Likert scale from 1 to 5), shows that this group had high average scores in their social motivation for music (4.45) and identity as “musically talented students” (4.36). The results did not differ between groups in musical learning and motivation based on children’s self-evaluation. However, their results differed significantly in areas such as math

(2.18 versus 3.87), reading (2.55 versus 4.01), and general ability to concentrate (3.64 versus 4.41) estimated also by their music class teacher. (Appendix.)

Music offered an opportunity to identify a strength that supported confidence, particularly for those who struggled in other subjects.

They've both had a bit of a hard time with going to school, and strangely enough, they've also improved at other subjects when they've realized they're great at music! (Teacher, interview)

I might lose the motivation to study certain things, but when it comes to music, if I must study a certain musical piece or something, I may sit for hours without pause at the piano, playing only the same piece so that I learn it in the way that I want to learn it. So, there is much passion to learn. (Interviewer: How gritty are you in other things?) It depends. Not very much. I easily lose my nerve. (Student, interview)

The enthusiasm for interpreting music fostered a strong musical identity among the children in music classes.

Summary: Identity

Music classes offered the children a beneficial environment for developing a positive identity as students who are “good at music.” Their shared interest in music and strong sense of participation developed children’s social awareness and self-knowledge (Goleman, 2011) related to their musical interest—not only about their capacities (Trust), but also about their feelings (Hope) related to their long-term goal or dream.

The becoming me mindset (Olander & Saarikallio, 2024a) is about integrating musical activities into one’s identity and self-image in a realistic, desirable, and positive way. With this mindset (Figure 1), one feels hope and believes that the chosen path helps one to become a better version of oneself. Following their own hopes (autonomy) related to their long-term goals appeared to be highly important to students. Typically, children could decide for themselves what instrument they wanted to learn.

Daisley (2022) states that “the extent to which we are successful or unsuccessful is shaped by factors outside of us and often beyond our immediate grasp.” He understands that “one of these factors is status” (Daisley, 2022, p. 119). Good musical skills could elevate a child’s status, the respect they received from others, within the class and provide positive transfer effects, leading to increased fortitude, courage in facing challenges and enthusiasm for learning.

Music Classes as Communities that Generate Children's Passion and Perseverance to Learn

The interviewed music class teachers explained how they utilized children's special musical interests and strengths in virtually all school subjects:

It is a rousing way to learn! When I organized a word test in English, I noticed that somebody was thinking about the song "under, behind..." and rhythm, trying to memorize these prepositions and doing hand movements at the same time. Under is under the desk, on is on the desk, and behind is behind the chair. These little things I would like to utilize even more. (Teacher, interview)

Teachers had noticed that music class students typically loved doing all kinds of creative tasks in groups during their recess.

If there's a band, let me know the people and come up with a name for it, and then we'll put a standard shift. Every Monday, you'll get to try it out. And then they do it themselves from then on. It works great. (Teacher, interview)

Music class studies offered much space for student's own ideas, which were then developed in the groups. Children shared the passion to perform, create, and express, so the music class offered an optimal environment for developing creativity.

There is much zest to learning in other classes, too, but music classes usually have those shared objects of love: a love to sing, play, and often dance. This is a very fruitful starting point. (Teacher, interview)

Teachers reported in the interviews how the parents' pride in their children appeared in the way they recorded performances and shared them on social media. Those videos allowed the children to revisit the moments of hype, mastery (Bandura, 1978), and accomplishment as a group.

It often happens that somebody's daddy has videotaped the performance and posted it—of course, without permission—to Facebook, no, to YouTube... Then the children suggest: "Let's watch that together!" Then they get the impression that the gig was actually very okay, and that's a really good feeling! (Teacher, interview)

The music class community could build meaningful shared goals and inspiration.

The music class has provided more performance opportunities. I am a very nervous person, but that has never stopped me from performing. Our class has performed a musical together, and we have raised money for a school camp by playing music. I think the projects have been fun and they have improved the class spirit. (Student, essay)

An important support for children's grit and fortitude seemed to be the organizational structures for practicing and performing, which supported children's high commitment.

Summary: Community

According to Haslam et al. (2018, p. 31), "When and to the extent that people define themselves in terms of shared social identity, they will develop a sense of efficacy, agency and power." The music class group offered a safe environment that offered possibilities for students to challenge themselves, get support and learn. The positive effect of the traditional music class culture could be analyzed as being much based on long tradition, developed through many decades of developmental work and offering stable structures, resources and a highly supportive organizational culture. In schools that had many decades of music class traditions, the skillful musical performances of upper grade classes inspired the children in lower grades, who waited for their turn to shine onstage.

Music Class Studies in Supporting Fortitude, Grit and Flourishing

This study highlighted the benefits of being part of a safe and supportive community with meaningful shared goals. Qualitative data of the current study built a picture of a long-term process: learning music and other school subjects in a safe and supportive community. The model of fortitude emphasizes the social aspect in the formation of resilience (Haslam et al., 2005; 2018; Daisley, 2022). The data were analyzed from the perspective of the elements of community, identity and control (Daisley, 2022) and their relationship with other models and theories of positive psychology.

The current analyses led to the inclusion of fortitude-supportive elements, referred to as "suns," into the model (Figure 2). Their logical placement was determined after interpreting their relationship with the components of the basic psychological needs theory and the THL model. The following components were interpreted to form clusters: 1) ON THE RIGHT: *identity (Daisley, 2022), autonomy (BPNT) and Hope (THL)*; 2) ON THE LEFT: *control (Daisley, 2022), competence (BPNT), and Trust (THL)*; and 3) DOWN: *community (Daisley, 2022), relatedness (BPNT), and Received love (THL)*; 4) UP *beneficence as a candidate psychological need (Martela & Ryan, 2020), Shared love and flourishing (THL) and grit inspired by love (THL)*.

Figure 2 models those elements that built resilience and "sisu," a Finnish concept synonymous with inner fortitude, the ability to challenge oneself and take action – rather than feel helpless, anxious and avoid all risks. Community-based resilience helped music class groups overcome difficulties together, which promoted flow, personal growth and happiness.

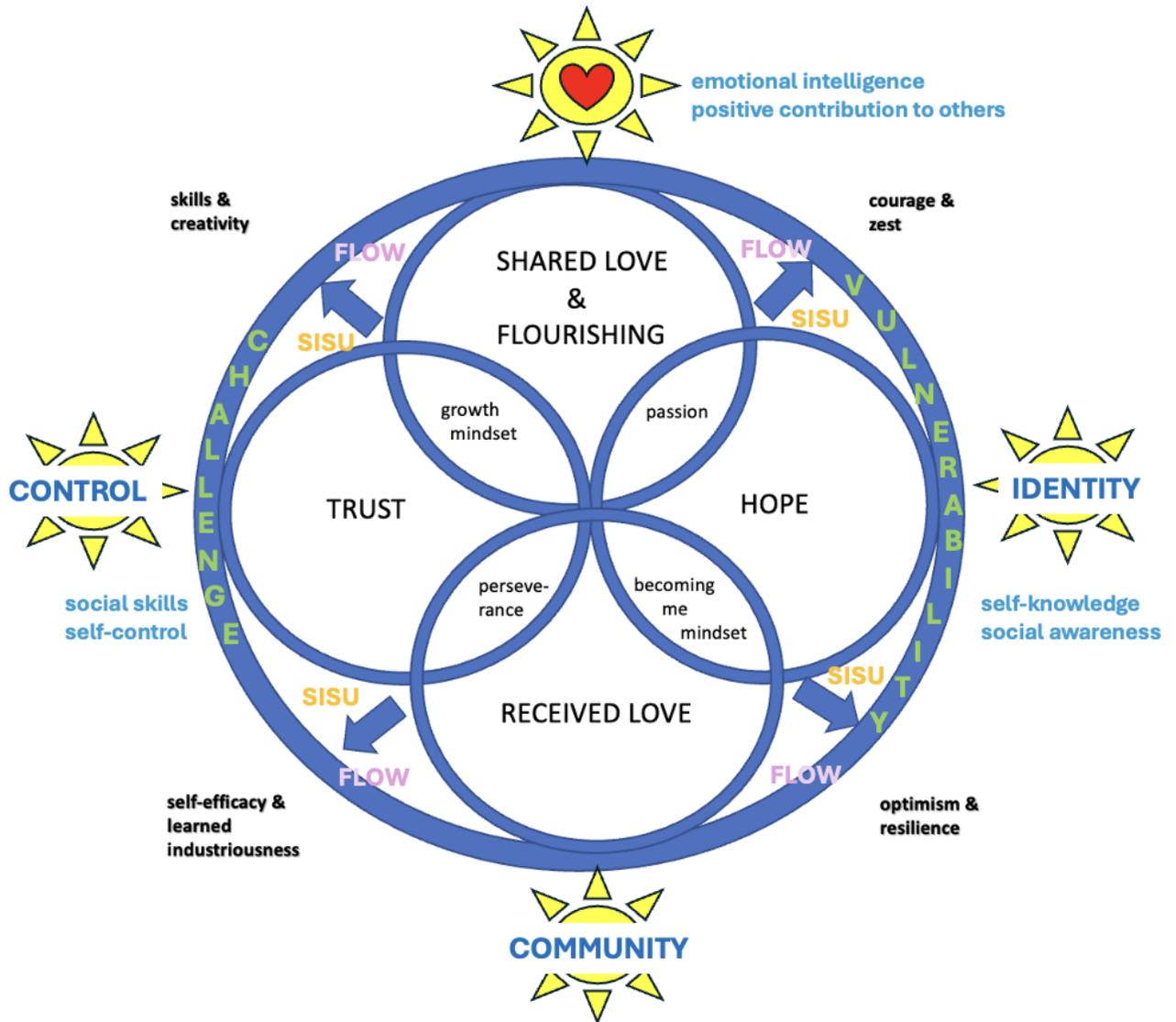


Figure 2. The model of positive education. Educational organizations and communities can foster fortitude by promoting a sense of control and positive, authentic identity. Passion and Hope (THL) can be ignited by offering inspiration and shared goals. Perseverance and Trust (THL) can be supported by maintaining structures that build commitment. Sisu and fortitude enable people to challenge themselves and thrive, experience flow, learn new things, grow and flourish.

The Shared love and flourishing component of the THL model (Figure 1 & Figure 2) displays the well-being benefits that enable grit and patience, necessary for delayed gratification (Cheng et al., 2012; Zhao et al., 2023). In music, artists not only share their artistic interpretation (or other results of their hard work) with an appreciative audience but also derive personal enjoyment from it (Lamont, 2012). According to our interpretation,

flourishing represents a reward of psychological well-being received after the dedicated effort of rigorous practice. It can be seen as a blend of basic psychological needs and wellness enhancers being satisfied (Olander & Saarikallio, 2022; 2024b).

This study also developed the THL model by adding the "zone of challenge and vulnerability" to it (Figure 2). Learning something new involves stepping slightly out of one's comfort zone. Unfortunately, this also means taking the risk of disappointment, vulnerability, anxiety, and shame (MacGregor, 2024). In the music class context discovering one's unique strength and passion ignited courage and enabled individuals to challenge themselves. This study found that many children initially suffered from stage fright, but almost all of them grew to be brave performers. Singing or playing before an audience meant revealing one's personality. However, thanks to their musical strength and supportive community, the children of music classes were not ashamed to show their musical passion openly and be brave and wholehearted (Brown, 2022).

According to Brown, attacks targeted at skills or identity easily awaken inner voices like "You will never be good enough!" or "Who do you think you are!" (Brown, 2022). Such attacks could easily undermine growth mindset and becoming me mindset (Figure 2), but in the case of music classes, their high group-based resilience, fortitude, gave students the courage to act and face challenges despite the risks. Participation in the music class community seemed to nurture children's inner fortitude, known as "sisu" (Lahti, 2022). This courage often paid off by leading to a state of flow and shared musical flourishing in musical performances. This provided children with very special opportunities to find meaning, experience flow, grow, and flourish.

Biesta (2009, p. 78) emphasizes the importance of meaning in education. He identifies the three functions of education as qualification, socialization, and subjectification. These concepts align well with our interpretation, viewing these domains of educational purpose as control, community, and identity (Figure 3).

Organizational structures seem to play a crucial role in fostering grit, fortitude, and flourishing through music education. Figure 3 illustrates the integration of fortitude-supportive elements: community, identity, and control (Daisley, 2022) with the THL model (Figure 1) as an "Intergenerational chain in developing human potential."

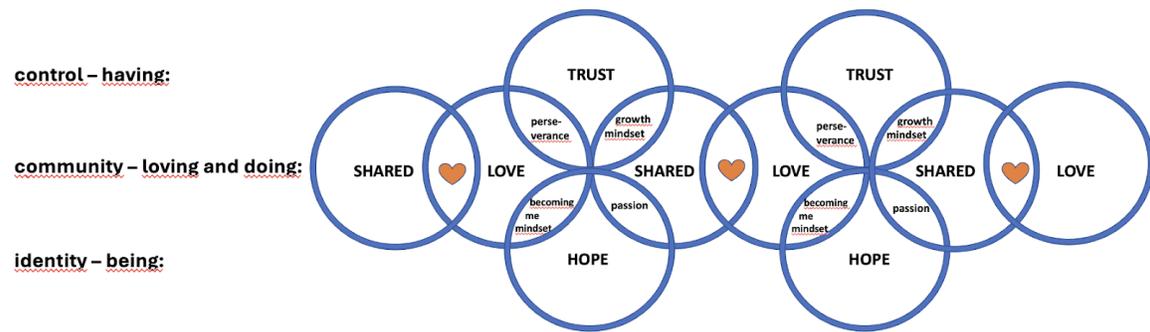


Figure 3. “The Intergenerational chain in developing human potential” displays how arts and science – and educational organizations – develop based on earlier generations’ passion and perseverance. Successful organizations create possibilities and resources for satisfying the areas of having (physical needs), doing (agency needs), loving (social needs) and being (humans as experiencing and evaluating their lives) (Allardt, 1993; Martela, 2024).

Collecting musically inclined children into the same class provided unique motivation for learning music, especially valuable for those needing special support in other subjects. Experienced music teachers observed each year how music class studies had rescued children who were on the verge of dropping out, helping them find purpose in their learning and develop a positive identity as skilled musicians.

Discussion: Toward Positive Music Education

The music class system can be seen as creating opportunities and resources that satisfy and build a sense of control, community, and identity. Generation after generation this chain has fostered “musical flourishing” through systemic support as a result from many decades of dedicated developmental work. The components discussed in the current paper further resonate with theoretical conceptualizations of well-being (Allardt, 1993; Martela, 2024). Further research is necessary to advance the understanding of how to support grit, fortitude, and flourishing through education and “positive music education” (Olander & Saarikallio, 2022; Van der Merwe & Erasmus, 2024), by combining research in positive psychology with music education.

The data for this study were collected at a significant moment – capturing the enduring success and underlying factors behind the Finnish school system, which achieved world-top scores in the 2003 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Music classes have consistently represented the best of Finnish education, making them an intriguing context for exploring positive education and positive organizational behavior. In recent years,

this system, which has been developed since the 1960s and has successfully met the needs of having, doing, loving, and being through music, has become more fragile. In many schools, music class students have now been assigned to parallel classes, but the "music emphasis" still allows them to gather for their weekly 90-minute music lesson.

This study highlighted the benefits of participating in a safe and supportive community that offers meaningful shared goals. Musical passion could be ignited by building inspiring and meaningful goals, such as ambitious musical performances, concerts, and musicals. Perseverance was supported by clear structures for musical learning and practice. All this enhanced students' musical skills and built their sense of control. The ability to use and actively develop their strengths, valued by the entire group, fostered a positive identity. Regular performances, shared ambitious musical challenges, and other musical activities seemed to significantly support these classes, fostering both learning and personal development, while bringing joy and meaning to the students' school days. The findings of the study demonstrate that goals of learning and wellbeing can align, highlighting the importance of research dialogue on education, organizational behavior, and wellbeing.

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Appendix

Variables concerning progress in musical skills and other skills. Comparison between the music class students with need for additional support and general support (Mann-Whitney U-test results).

Variable	General support		Need for additional support		Difference	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	U	p
1. The child's perception of their musical abilities, mean (1–5)	4.09	.71	4.23	.00	.75	<i>n.s.</i>
2. The teacher's perception of the child's musical abilities, mean (1–5)	4.27	.71	3.67	.67	194.00	<.01
3. The teacher's assessment of the student's musicality (1–5)	4.37	.77	4.18	.87	330.00	<i>n.s.</i>
4. Home support for playing an instrument, mean (1–5)	3.65	.57	3.40	.56	261.00	<i>n.s.</i>
5. Social motivation for music, mean (1–5)	3.98	.92	4.45	.64	259.5	<i>n.s.</i>
6. Student's relationship with music (1–5)	3.82	1.26	4.27	1.01	287.00	<i>n.s.</i>
7. Having musical dreams (1–2)	1.32	.47	1.38	.52	189.00	<i>n.s.</i>
8. Perceiving the instrument teacher as encouraging (1–5)	4.61	.69	4.57	.79	212.00	<i>n.s.</i>
9. The child's experience of music as a strength (1–5)	4.18	.93	4.36	.92	330.00	<i>n.s.</i>
10. The child's school success in mathematics as assessed by the teacher (1–5)	3.87	1.08	2.18	.98	104.50	<.001
11. The child's school success in the mother tongue as assessed by the teacher (1–5)	4.01	1.02	2.55	1.04	123.00	<.001
12. Ability to concentrate on lessons of other subjects (1–5)	4.41	.93	3.64	1.29	241.00	<.05
13. The teacher's prediction of how high a level the child will progress in playing by the 9th grade (1–5)	4.34	.78	3.64	.81	206.50	<.05

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

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