



# Building Muscle: Identifying Resiliency Needs of Beginning Agriculture Teachers

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## Introduction

- Researchers have indicated that teachers with higher levels of resilience have more cognitive and physical energy to manage their responsibilities. (Thieman et al., 2014)
- Resiliency can lead to enhanced teacher effectiveness, improved job satisfaction, and the flexibility to adjust to changing conditions. (Bobek, 2002)
- Hoopes (2017) identified seven resilience muscles that individuals can utilize to maintain or regain productivity in the midst of challenging circumstances and disruptive change.
- Researchers have asserted that resilience is not a fixed trait, and can be improved. (Hoopes & Kelly, 2004)

## Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore beginning agriculture teachers' perceived areas of concern about their resilience from which induction program leaders can provide resilience building programming.

## Theoretical Framework

- Henderson and Milstein's (2003) theory of resilience, and Hoopes' (2017) concept of resilience muscles guided this study.
- Hoopes described seven areas (*muscles*) that can be used by resilient individuals to maintain or regain productivity, motivation, commitment, and well-being in challenging situations.
- Connor (1993) noted that resilient individuals are able to see the opportunity in changing situations, and therefore, tend to be more successful.
- As it relates to the present study, building resilience through induction programming, Easterly and Myers (2018) noted a link between professional development and resilience.

## References

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## Methods

- The participants for this study were first-year (7) agriculture teachers in New Mexico enrolled in the Beginning Agriscience Teacher Support (BATS) program.
- BATS is an induction program for beginning teachers in a collaborative agreement between New Mexico State University and Eastern New Mexico University funded by a USDA-Higher Education Challenge Grant.
- During the initial BATS workshop, the participants were provided instruction regarding resilience, characteristics of resilient teachers, and strategies to build resilience.
- At the conclusion of the workshop, the participants engaged in semi-structured interviews with program leaders regarding their resilience *muscles*.
- The interviews were recorded and transcribed by BATS program leaders.
- Transcripts were qualitatively coded for resilience key words and then categorized into the respective resilience *muscle*.

## Results

- All resilience muscles were identified as areas where improvement was needed.
- Creativity and Experimenting ( $f = 5$ ) were the most common *muscles* needing improvement.
- The participants were least concerned about their Confidence and Structure ( $f = 2$ ) *muscles*.

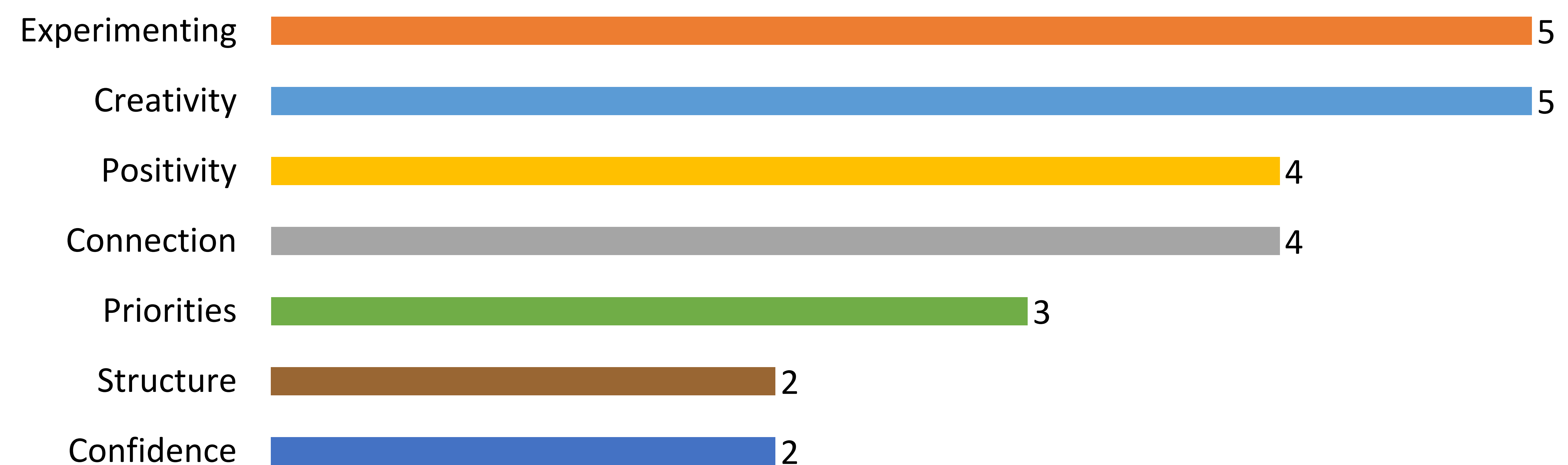


Figure 1. Resilience Muscle Improvement Areas (N = 7)

## Conclusions/Recommendations

- The participants were the most resilient in creating structure out of chaos and confidence in their abilities to navigate challenges.
- The participants had concerns regarding their abilities to manage and accept challenges along with finding creative solutions to solve them.
- It is recommended that researchers continue to identify effective resiliency-building strategies that can be embedded in preservice teacher education program.
- Instruction in resiliency-building strategies should also be provided to experienced teachers through in-service programming.
- All teachers should continually monitor their resilience and employ reflection as a tool to identify their strengths and weaknesses that may be maintained and improved.