ACADEMIC HOPE THEORY: IMPLICATIONS FOR PROMOTING ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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OVERVIEW

 Definition of Hope
 Results Research on Hope
 Implications for Practice
What is Academic Hope?
ACADEMIC HOPE THEORY

- The process of thinking about one’s goals, along with the motivation to move toward those goals (agency) and the strategies to achieve those goals (pathways).

Snyder, Shorey, Cheavens, Pulvers, Adams, & Wiklund (2002).
AGENCY AND PATHWAYS

 Agency
  • Cognitive momentum that translates into a “can do” attitude relating to people’s confidence in their abilities to attain valued goals.
  • Involves a person’s motivation or willpower.

 Pathways
  • Pathways thinking is a person’s perceived ability to produce ways to reach a goal.
  • Pathways thinking involves creating strategies to reach one’s goal.
  • The more strategies a person can generate to attain a goal, the stronger that person’s pathways thinking is.

Snyder, Shorey, Cheavens, Pulvers, Adams, & Wiklund 2002; Rand, 2008.
FOUR ASPECTS OF HOPE THEORY

1. Goals - anchors of hope theory as they provide direction and an endpoint for hopeful thinking.
2. Pathway Thoughts - refer to the routes we take to achieve our desired goals and the individual’s perceived ability to produce these routes.
3. Agency Thoughts - refer to the motivation we have to undertake the routes towards our goals.
4. Barriers - block the attainment of our goals and in the event of a barrier we can either give up or we can use our pathway thoughts to create new routes.

Snyder, 2000
Clinical psychologist C. R. Snyder (2002) conceived hope theory, a theory in the area of positive psychology, based on the underlying assumption that human actions are goal directed and “as such, the goal is the cognitive component that anchors hope theory” (p. 250).
HOPE AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS

- High hope individuals do not react in the same way to barriers as low hope individuals, instead they view barriers as challenges to overcome and use their pathway thoughts to plan an alternative route to their goals.

Snyder, 2000
HOPE IS A COGNITIVE MOTIVATIONAL CONSTRUCT

- “Hope is not an emotion but rather a dynamic cognitive motivational system.”
- “Emotions follow cognitions in the process of goal pursuits.”

Snyder, Shorey, Cheavens, Pulvers, Adams, & Wiklund (2002).
OPTIMISM VS. HOPE

“An optimist may believe that things will turn out as he or she wants but does not possess the pathways necessary to pursue and acquire the goals” (Snyder, 1995)
HOPE THEORY APPLIED TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

- High-hope students are able to conceive of many strategies to attain goals and plan contingencies when faced with obstacles.
- High-hope students perceive the likelihood of positive outcomes, focus on success and therefore, experience less distress and greater positive affect.
HOPEFUL THINKING AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

- Hopeful thinking allows students to make commitments, to set goals, and to work effectively toward attaining those goals.
- When lacking in hope, students lower their academic expectations and their subsequent performances suffer.
- Students’ low hopes often become self-fulfilling prophecies in which they do not expend requisite energies for success.
- Believing that they inevitably will succeed, high-hope students are not sidetracked by goal-blocking thoughts of failure.
- High hope students experience less general anxiety and less anxiety in test-taking situations.

Snyder, Shorey, & Rand, 2008
STATE OR TRAIT?

- If measured as goal specific (e.g., academic goals), hope found to be a “state” and malleable. In other words, students’ hope levels can be changed by educational interventions.

- Rand and Kahle-Wrobleski (2009) found that a goal-specific measure of hope predicted goal attainment better than the Hope Scale (which measures hope regarding goals in general and treats hope as a “disposition” or stable “trait”).
ACADEMIC HOPE SCALE

1. If I should find myself in a jam, I could think of many ways to get out of it.
2. At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my academic goals.
3. There are lots of ways around any school-related problems that I may face.
4. Right now I see myself as being pretty successful.
5. I can think of many ways to reach my current academic goals.
6. I see myself meeting the goals I have set for myself.

6-item scale adapted from Snyder, Sympson, Ybasco, Borders, Babyak, and Higgins, 1996.
Coefficient alpha of .888. based on IUPUI Entering Student Survey, 2012
WHAT IS DOES RESEARCH TELL US ABOUT ACADEMIC HOPE?
**HIGH HOPE ASSOCIATED WITH**

- better academic performance
- improved athletic performance
- psychological adjustment
- coping with physical illness
- likelihood of finding benefit in adversity
- lower depression

- Therapeutic interventions derived from hope theory have received empirical support

Rand and Kahle-Wrobleski, 2009, literature review
HOPE PREDICTS ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

- High-hope students obtained higher grades and achievement test scores throughout their elementary, junior high-school, high-school, and college years compared to low-hope students (Chang, 1998; Curry, Maniar, Sondag, & Sandstedt, 1999; Lopez, Bouwkamp, Edwards, & Teramoto Pediotti, 2000; Snyder, 2002).

- Higher hope scale scores predicted higher grade point averages, lower drop-out rates, and higher graduation rates across students’ undergraduate careers even when controlling for entrance examination scores (Snyder, Shorey, Cheavens, Pulvers, Adams, & Wiklund, 2002).
HOPE AND GOAL ATTAINMENT

- Rand and Kahle-Wrobleski (2009) conducted a longitudinal test of the ability of hope to predict goal achievement.
- Goal-specific hope found to mediate relationship between goal importance upon attainment (measured at a later date).
- Participants adjusted their hope levels based on their actual goal attainment.
- Research supported the central tenet of hope theory—that hope drives successful goal pursuit and attainment.
- Also found that hope and goal-accomplishment reciprocally influence one another. Not only did hope lead to goal pursuit and attainment, but hope was then readjusted to bring it into line with level of goal success.
ADVISING AND ACADEMIC HOPE: THEORETICAL MODEL

Advising Processes: Academic Goal Facilitation

Academic Hope

Academic Performance (cumulative grade point averages)
Purpose of the qualitative study was to explore the underlying non-cognitive processes and institutional factors that allowed first-year students to enact effective strategies for attaining academic success and persisting despite obstacles.

In response to Clark’s call for future studies that investigate and, “offer conceptual guides to better understand how students perceive and experience specific types of challenges” (Clark, 2006, p. 313).

Hansen, Trujillo, Boland, & MacKinnon (in press). Journal of College Student Retention, 16(1).
We conducted interviews with two unique groups of students that faced substantial obstacles:

1. Students who were predicted to succeed based on a quantitative admission prediction model, but were placed on probation during their first semester and ultimately overcame the setback.

2. Students who were not predicted to succeed based on the model, but attained high levels of academic success during their first year (GPAs above 3.2 on a 4.0 scale) and continued to persist.

Hansen, Trujillo, Boland, & MacKinnon (in press). Journal of College Student Retention, 16(1).
HOPE, GENERATING ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS, AND USE OF ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL SUPPORTS

Hansen, Trujillo, Boland, & MacKinnon (in press). Journal of College Student Retention, 16(1).
OBSTACLES TO COLLEGE TRANSITION AND STUDENT PERSISTENCE

Hansen, Trujillo, Boland, & MacKinnon (in press). Journal of College Student Retention, 16(1).
DEVELOPING STRATEGIES AND ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO OBSTACLES

“I felt that it was difficult for me at first to get (to) used the notion of college and how it worked - you know compared to high school and I was having a hard time because I was trying to work full-time in retail and take a full load of classes...And so this semester I finally got it together and got a job on campus. I’m doing much better in my courses and I think that it’s important for you during your first year of college to look for a job on campus if you must work and then to see - you know - really focus on your studies.”
OVERCOMING OBSTACLE OF COMMUTING AND GETTING TO CLASS ON-TIME

“So I just sat down and said OK I really just need to do this and make it a point to get there every day and (I) turned it around...I have a couple of friends who are in the same situation; we live near each other and none of us lived on-campus. So we would ride together sometimes and keep each other in check. Make sure that we all made it.”
AGENCY AND PATHWAYS

“I scored very low on a test so naturally I was almost to the point where I had to play catch-up the entire time to do better in the course. I decided that I had to study harder and just work a little bit more. Just staying on top of things and not just saying oh you know I’ll study for that later. I studied harder and I studied smarter.”
AGENCY: “CAN DO” ATTITUDE

“I’ve always felt like I would be very -very successful because I always know if I put my mind to something I can do it.”

“I felt I would be pretty successful....I had a lot of help....the first-year theme learning communities were great for that and I felt that with their help I could be very successful.”
INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTS AND POSITIVE CLIMATE

“It was the K201 case problems and I was having problems learning Access...I missed for probably like a week and a half of class. Was really sick and I had to catch up so I went to the mentoring center. They got me a tutor and they tutored me one day for about three or four hours and they taught me how to do it. I’m glad like that the [mentoring center] and I’m glad that I took the initiative to go find me a tutor to know the stuff because if I wouldn’t have, I would not have passed the class.”
INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTS AND POSITIVE CLIMATE

- “I like the fact that I can just walk in and talk to an advisor whenever I need to, that was really helpful.”
- “I think [University] is friendly everyone is there to help you.”
- “I used the writing lab. I thought that was really helpful, like you actually get to sit down one on one with someone... I was having trouble like with the beginning of my paper. I just can’t like get it together and they just sat down and helped me through it so I thought that was very helpful.”
What are some implications for practice and how can we impact academic hope levels?
HOPE APPLIED TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

- Having hope means that students will have:
  - Well-defined goals
  - A belief in their ability to develop strategies for reaching those goals
  - Requisite motivation to use strategies
  - Ability to retain high levels of positive affect
  - Commitment to persevere longer and to expend more effort on challenging academic tasks

- “The combination of these three cognitive components of goals, pathways, and agency directly impacts academic achievements and contributes to positive emotions.” (Shorey, Snyder, Feldman, & Little, 2004 as cited in Snyder, Shorey, & Rand, 2008)
INSTITUTIONS CAN AFFECT HOPE

- Colleges and universities can have a significant impact on at-risk students’ success and retention through creating opportunities for students to experience quality relationships with advisors, peer mentors, or faculty members who are willing and encouraged to:
  - Help students set clear goals.
  - Determine alternative pathways when encountering difficulties.
  - Create an atmosphere that is welcoming.
Impact of Faculty and Staff on Students

- Schreiner, Noel, Anderson, & Cantwell, 2012
- Journal of College Student Development
- Qualitative Study of 62 successful high-risk students from nine different colleges and universities.
- Students asked to identify and describe someone on campus who had been most influential in their ability to persist.
- 54 campus personnel who were identified by these students were interviewed twice to learn what they do to help students succeed and persist.
WHAT MADE THE IMPACT?

- A desire to connect with students.
- Being unaware of their influence on students at critical junctures: “Angels Unaware.”
- Wanting to make a difference in students’ lives.
- Possessing a wide variety of personality styles and strengths but being perceived by students as genuine and authentic.
- Being intentional about connecting personally with students.
**Institutional Context Matters!**

- Institutions, faculty, staff, and advisors can make a difference in students’ perceptions, behaviors, and hope (Snyder, Shorey, & Rand, 2008).

- Institutions can create and develop structured academic support programs that offer opportunities for students to:
  - establish positive connections with faculty, advisors, staff, peer mentors, and other students;
  - set realistic learning goals;
  - develop specific strategies for overcoming potential setbacks;
  - actively reflect on educational experiences and visualize future success;
  - seek help in a supportive atmosphere.
HELPING STUDENTS ATTAIN COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Snyder et al. (2008) contend that faculty members and advisors can assist students in developing effective strategies (pathways) for reaching course goals by:
  - Articulating clear goals in course syllabi
  - Helping students feel more motivated to accomplish course goals or objectives (agency) by delivering lessons with excitement and energy.

- Students will be more likely to discover workable pathways and the necessary motivations to attain the instructors’ educational objectives.
This conceptual model is implemented through best-practices in portfolio pedagogy including overarching structures, reflective prompts, defining of audience, rubrics and feedback, as well as the framework provided by “learning partnerships” (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).
“Given that some level of hope is present in all college students, recognizing this characteristic and its potential to influence completion of a meaningful college experience is warrant for inclusion in the ePDP Conceptual Model”

According to King and Kitchener (1994) “teaching students to engage in reflective thinking and to make reflective judgments about vexing problems is a central goal of higher education” (p. 222)

Hope enables students to approach problems with a focus on success, thereby increasing the probability that they will attain their goals (Conti, 2000)

- Cynthia Landis, ePDP Conceptual Model Group
  - February, 28 2013
USING THEORY, RESEARCH, AND ASSESSMENT TO GUIDE PRACTICE

- Past research has shown that students attending institutions that offer comprehensive systems of academic support programs based on effective educational practices are more likely to perform better academically, to be more satisfied, and to be retained and persist to graduation (Kuh, 2008).

- “Simply offering such programs and practices does not guarantee that they will have the intended effects on student success; institutional programs and practices must be of high quality, customized to meet the needs of students they are intended to reach, and firmly rooted in a student success-oriented campus culture” Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea (2008).
QUESTIONS!