Hope Levels in Urban School Psychology Internship Students: A Mixed Methods Case Study Exploration

DISSERTATION

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By

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Abstract

This study represents the perceptions of three Ohio State University master’s level school psychology graduate students while serving their internship training year in an urban school district. Specifically, these case studies focused on the exploration of these students’ levels of hope as they trained in the more challenging environment of the urban school. This exploration was then linked to the students’ sense of commitment to the urban school as a work environment for the long-term, and necessarily describes the graduate training preparation and support they received in developing work-related levels of hopeful thinking. Hope levels become part of the building of the positive institution of the school from the ground up – through the graduates of education training programs. The researcher conducted the study in order that the voices of these participants could be heard through the conduit of the qualitative case study narrative; collected quantitative data serves as a supplement to this narrative sharing of experience. Collected data produced a model for hope training in school psychology education programs that includes five areas of hope training: significant exposure to the urban school environment, the development of shared, clear goals for internship training, selection of urban school supervisors with a successful record of hopeful “coaching,” regular provided feedback on goal progress, and continued university discussion of goals, and problem-solving skill development.
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Fields of Study

Major Field: Education
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Chapter 1

Introduction

It is accepted both popularly and academically that American public schools struggle to educate many children, and that broad public services have been unable to sustain any improvement in the lives of our most vulnerable young people (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007). Despite decades of educational reform that imposed higher academic standards, tougher graduation requirements, and stronger mandates for teacher achievement, educational theorists have concluded that these changes have had little affect on the life trajectories of the most disadvantaged (Schorr, 1988). Many American parents and guardians are faced with the daunting challenge of finding appropriate educational and mental and physical health services for their children when public monies for such are being cut, access is increasingly limited, and children face an increasingly competitive, complex, and globalized world (Williams, Horvath, Wei, Van Dorn, & Jonson-Reid, 2007).

In part to answer this need, public schools are evolving into institutions that provide multiple services outside the scope of the purely academic. Despite continued public suspicion of school competency, schools are pressured to provide student counseling, life skill training, health care and, in some cases, childcare to students who
may have no outside access to them. Hoagwood, Burns, Kiser, Ringeisen, and Schoenwald (2001) report that up to 80% of all children who receive mental health services receive them in the in the school setting. O'Connor (2001) writes of the necessity of dental services at a Portland, Oregon urban school, where children have no outside access to services. Harvey (2007) notes that schools fill the gap left by absent or overworked parents and guardians by providing behavioral management programs and violence prevention.

Teachers, school staff and administrators often stand as the people most familiar with a child’s daily life, and most able to identify which children require greater academic assistance or mental/physical health referrals (Williams et al., 2007). Yet these very people have been identified as professionals most “at risk” for work-related burnout, stress, and emotional fatigue – a risk that increases when a school’s ecology is influenced by the further challenges of the urban setting (Grayson & Alvarez, 2007; Howey, Arends, Galluzzo, Yarger, & Zimpher, 1994). In particular, teachers share the greatest stress burden of all school personnel. They are “the largest homogeneous occupational group investigated in burnout research” (O’Donnell, Lambert, & McCarthy, 2008, p.152).

A significant amount of educational professionals choose to leave school settings early in their careers (Smith & Smith, 2006). Challenging parents, restrictive legislative mandates, and more at-risk students combine with low salaries, limited professional respect and burdensome workloads to encourage poor job retention (Schonfeld, 2001). Educational staff members do not specify low salary or workload as the chief determinant in their decision to leave, but a negative workplace environment as a whole (Smith &
Smith, 2006). School personnel characterize the negative work environment as one where chaos and disorganization reign, student violence is challenging, and a lack of connection to institutional goals (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Lee, 2005).

Urban school counselors and psychologists cite unmanageable caseloads as having the greatest affect on their mental health, ability to adequately relate to students, and ability to do their jobs effectively (Daniels, Bradley, & Hays, 2007; Kohler, 2007; Lee, 2005). They further report being hampered by administration in establishing structured program changes or whole-school behavioral plans by “expanding bureaucratic interference or indifference” despite the fact that they seem most professionally able to contribute to such transformations (Lee, 2005, p.187).

Daniels et al. (2007) report that though there is recognition that urban school personnel may face these regular stressors, little is done to provide them with mental health services or support, and that “the importance of these services cannot be understated” (p.654). Bernshausen and Cunningham (2001) strongly encourage the addition of resiliency components to preservice programs but note little has been done to incorporate this in professional education training. Yost (2006) notes that teacher preparation programs that nurture students are more likely to provoke future resiliency in professionals. Although it is difficult to imagine individuals in other professions performing adequately in an environment colored by fear, urban school personnel are expected to achieve the same high standards met by much safer and more privileged schools and often, to do so with little, appropriate preservice training.

Statement of the Problem
While it is agreed in scholarly literature that education workers in the urban environment face more substantial challenges than ever before, and that our nation’s need in this area is great, comparatively little research has been done on preparing education professionals to survive and thrive in these settings. Research has primarily focused on the failures of administrators and educators to improve the academics of disadvantaged populations; poor curriculum; subpar relationships among teachers, staff, students and parents; and the failures of students and teachers to bring schools to acceptable levels of state or federal accountability. Yet, numerous studies have suggested that building resilient school staff can create strong schools. Further, theorists continue to recognize long-term and stable relationships with teachers, counselors, school psychologists, social workers, and administrators as central to a child’s success in any school environment, but particularly the urban settings (Bershausen & Cunningham, 2001; Foote, 2005; Kindall-Smith, 2004; Patterson et al., 2004; Schorr, 1988).

Although research is just beginning in this area, it may be invaluable for graduate training programs and school reform theorists to consider how research in the field of positive psychology with its focus on positive emotions, strengths, and institutions, can contribute to the literature on improving the mental health of urban school staff (Seligman, 2000). Building up the individual resiliency of urban school staff members as well as contributing to the overall positivity of the school environment may serve as one answer to addressing several of the challenges inherent in the urban academic setting. Specifically, school psychology’s paradigm shift towards a comprehensive health care in the schools (Nastasi, 2000) pushes the school psychologist into a leadership role
concerning the modeling and advocacy of positive strengths such as hope, optimism and enthusiasm (Miller et al., 2008; Akin-Little, Little and Delligatti, 2004). Miller et al. (2008) further suggest that studies exploring what makes school psychologists resilient in the face of projected shortages are “timely” (p.680). Urban training programs that encourage such positive strengths in school psychology students may help buffer them against the stressors of urban education environments and ignite the process of creating the positive school climate.

**Purpose of the Study**

Education training programs are uniquely positioned to address the resilience of graduates through pre-graduation training programs and support, particularly those preparing students for work in more stressful, urban environments. Hope, much like optimism, is a part of this resilience. Training programs that help develop trainees’ levels of hope in the face of more adverse field placement settings, can potentially contribute to graduates’ sense of commitment to urban school environments. This can lead to greater, long-term relationships with vulnerable students, increases in productivity and the modeling of hope for other staff (Snyder & Feldman, 2000).

Here, an urban-focused graduate training program in school psychology was explored to examine how master’s level students are prepared for urban school placements. The experiences of three urban internship students were studied. Specifically, these case studies focused on the exploration of these students’ levels of hope as they trained in the more challenging environment of the urban school. This exploration was then linked to the students’ sense of commitment to the urban school as a
work environment for the long-term, and necessarily describes the graduate training preparation and support they received in developing work-related levels of hopeful thinking. Chosen data collection and analysis procedures are not intended to be evaluative in nature – this is not a critique of one urban school psychology master’s preparation program. The data gathered is intended to contribute to a general model of school psychology training that can be applied in all internship placements – what training methods and approaches to field training placement might best promote hopeful thinking in students. Hope levels become part of the building of the positive institution of the school from the ground up – through the graduates of education training programs. Hope -- identified as a part of the broader positive psychology “family” (Snyder, 2000, p.257) -- becomes “but one pane” in building the window of the school as a positive institution (Snyder, 2000, p.268) – one pane in that which defines the resiliency of the urban practitioner.

Definitions

Resilience.

It could be argued that the entire positive psychology movement is the study of human resilience: how do individuals overcome the ever-present life challenges to achieve success and happiness? Resilience has primarily been applied to individuals found at risk for a failure to thrive due more to socioeconomic level, family disruption, or other environmental factors rather than cognitive deficit or biological destiny. Howard, Dryden and Johnson (1999) expand on the work of Masten, et al. (1990) to define resiliency as “the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite
challenging or threatening circumstances” (p.310). They define this resilience in three parts: the internal strengths any one person might possess to overcome challenges; that person’s coping skills at any given moment of strain and the person’s ability to bounce back from trauma. Rutter (1990) cautions that this conception of resilience is not a fixed entity, but must be conceived as fluid, ebbing and flowing with the circumstances of a person’s life. Protective factors leading to an individual’s resilience are both internal and external. Rutter (1984) and Masten, Best and Garmezy (1990) underscore the capacity for self-esteem, efficacy and “a feeling of your own self worth, as well as a feeling that you can deal with things and that you can control what happens to you” (Rutter, 1984, p.60). Bosworth and Earthman (2002) suggest that a greater emphasis should be placed by researchers on the external or community factors that may or may not contribute to any one person’s resilience. In the scope of this study that would include the training of urban school psychology graduate students.

**Optimism and Hope.**

The constructs of hope and optimism are often grouped together in wellness enhancement literature (Miller, Gilman, & Martens, 2007). Both are considered forecasters of a variety of health-related outcomes including overall life positivity and contentment (Peterson, 2000). Research by Snyder (2000) has linked higher hope levels with greater success in the areas of academics and athletic performance. Seligman (1998) finds that individual failure in academic or work settings “can occur when talent and desire are present in abundance, but optimism is missing” (p.13). In part, Seligman (1991) defines optimism in terms of explanatory style theory (Seligman, Reivich, Jaycox,
& Gillham, 1995), which posits that optimistic individuals explain bad events as merely temporary and unrelated to inherent personal characteristics, whereas pessimistic individuals see challenges as more permanent, overwhelming and distinctly linked to personal tendencies over which they have little control. Overall, optimism is a “general expectation for good outcomes in the future” (Boman, Furlong, Shochet, Lilles, & Jones, 2009, p.32) whereas McDermott and Snyder (2000) characterize hope as “a thought process that facilitates goal setting and helps us work effectively to reach those goals” (p.5). One definition seems linked to the other with both appearing in positive psychology literatures as necessary tools for humans to engage in optimal functioning (Jenson, Olympia, Farley, & Clark, 2004). Yet most research definitions support a distinction between the two based on optimism as an overall expectation and hope as a series of thought processes leading to achieving clear goals (Bryant & Cvengros, 2004).

The constructs of optimism, hope and resilience seem familiar, if not similar, in definition, inexorably chained together. Literatures describing theories on all three seem to mirror one another in word choice and study procedure; it is notable that theorists mainly work hard to differentiate their specific constructs from the others. For example, Snyder takes pains to set apart his Hope Theory from resiliency as a construct (2000; as cited in Rutter, 1994). He notes that both hope and resiliency aid individuals in overcoming the inevitable barriers and obstacles of life; he further states that both constructs – at least within his conception of Hope Theory – employ the use of goal directed thinking insofar as “the pursuit of goals should produce positive emotions” and
are “consistent” in terms of definition, but that Hope Theory has a stronger, more specific set of steps including agency and pathways thought patterns (p. 29-30).

For the purposes of this study, resilience is defined as an overarching construct: the internal and external factors that may help any individual bounce back from adversity. It serves as a general term that consists of smaller constructs – hope and optimism among them – that can contribute to its overall strength. Thus, the student with greater hope is more resilient, hope becoming part of his/her resilience to outside stressors or barriers. When the high hope individual is confronted by such a barrier, he or she is able, by nature of his/her hopeful thinking, to think of multiple solutions to the problem (Snyder et al., 2005). The terms are not interchangeable; hope is a building block of resiliency, not its only core component. Yet, the more hopeful individual is necessarily more resilient (Snyder, 2000). As hope is a more studied aspect of positive psychology research, it serves as the construct chosen for the scope of this study.

**Research Questions**

This dissertation explored the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of master’s level school psychology interns on internships in urban settings?
   
   (a) How are these interns prepared for work in urban educational settings? How do they evaluate its effectiveness in their current urban internship settings;
   
   (b) How do these interns perceive the urban school environment;
   
   (c) How has participants’ past work, school experiences, or training contributed to their responses – positive or negative -- to this environment;
(d) How do the interns describe their experiences with clients, supervisors, school and university personnel as they complete their internship experiences?

2. How do these interns experience hope?

(a) Do these interns feel “hopeful” upon the completion of their training as defined by Snyder’s Hope Theory (1991);

(b) How do the interns describe their process of goal-setting with university and school supervisors;

(c) How did field supervisors serve as models of hopeful behavior? How did this hopeful behavior manifest itself?

**Perspective of the Researcher**

The methods of qualitative research assume, and to some extent celebrate, the bias of the researcher. By definition, qualitative data is not analyzed in its final form until it is filtered through the researcher; it does not adopt the distance between researcher and the researched that is advocated by postpositivist methodologies. Strauss (1987) calls this researcher bias a “potential gold mine” that must be seen as yet another rich stream of data strongly applicable to a final data corpus (p.11). The bias must be explored and documented to the extent that it continues to capture, enhance, complement, or influence authentically, the narratives of study subjects. This attempt toward understanding researcher bias within any given study is seen in qualitative research as part of the “crisis of representation” (Denzin & Lincoln, p.19) where the *text* developed through postpositivist research must, by definition, assault our quantitative understandings of legitimacy or validity.
This study reflects this crisis as the researcher – a doctoral student in the Ohio State University’s School Psychology program and herself engaged on internship -- necessarily became part of the research study. Thus, the perspective of the researcher is one of actively engaging in the study subjects’ narratives of internship experience to the point that the action may border on praxis, a descriptor of action research where a researcher acts upon conditions in order to influence or change them (Lather, 1986). To some extent, this action may be unavoidable; the researcher is older, has had more experience under supervision and within graduate programs, may serve as a model to the subjects, and has experiences and opinions of her own related to her internship experience. The researcher’s bias thus necessarily intersects with the subjects and serves as a catalyst for crisis within the data that must be resolved – as best as it can be – by a steady and continual reflection by the researcher on the process of data collection, conceptualization, and analysis.

Here, the researcher addresses the crisis through the process of epoche – where, according to Creswell (1998) – the previous knowledge or experience of the researcher is emptied onto the page through bracketing consistent with a discussion of the study narratives or cases. Though epoche is described as primarily a tool for phenomenological study, it is not theoretically restricted from case study research and is considered part of the human science method and philosophic tradition of narrative reconstruction and discussion (Van Manen, 2002). During this study’s epoche process, the researcher explored her own perceptions of the urban environment, the subjects’ hope levels, the
university preparation process, etc., in order to supplement the subjects’ narratives as well as contribute to the multiple streams of data present in the study.
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The Urban Context

The term *urban* occupies a dual meaning in the American psyche. It signifies upscale, diverse neighborhoods near art galleries, jazz-playing coffeehouses, and independent bookstores. It is also employed to describe decaying communities, treeless city blocks, violence, congestion, and poverty. To think “urban” is to think of the city with all its stereotyped promises and faults. It is to think of a place where yuppies can live two streets over from neighborhoods crumbling under the weight of drugs and gang warfare, yet visit Starbucks for a latte every morning in complete, naïve safety.

Population density is what formally defines the urban, rather than economics, race, or a proliferation of concrete structures. U.S. Census Data (2002) indicates that an urban area has 1,000 people per square mile and that what is *metropolitan* is an area with a large, central population that engages regularly with surrounding, smaller, less populated areas such as suburbs or townships that may be dependent on the metropolitan center for economic support and sociopolitical infrastructure. Lee (2005) reports that the
urban is characterized not only by a high-density population, but also by a high concentration of diversity, particularly of people of color. This urban context is one of constant demographical flux, the social fabric regularly revitalized by a steady stream of immigrants into new urban neighborhoods, exurbs, suburbs, and beyond (Howey et al., 1994). This continual change has been attributed to some of the “social disorganization” that is attributed to the central city community along with violence and poverty (Smith & Smith, 2006, p.35). Very rarely are these neighborhoods described without the word *challenge* or *failure* applied as a descriptor, with further reference to inadequate health care access, community fragmentation and high crime rates (Foote, 2005; Lee, 2005; Olson & Jerald, 1998).

Foote (2005) cautions against rigid definitions of the urban, suggesting that city neighborhoods are no longer populated solely by people of color or characterized only as communities struggling with poverty and crime. Foote notes suburbs also have embraced diversity and are challenged by families of differing socioeconomic statuses:

The definition of urban and inner city is changing as it becomes more and more difficult to make distinctions between urban and suburban areas based on the socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the people living in these locations. (p.371)

Yon (2000) argues that defining the central city neighborhood as urban necessitates a discussion of the discourses that make the word inherently negative in popular consciousness. Yon notes that structured classifications of these geographical terms ignores the influence of our more globalized world where television and internet
create realities that exist beyond clichés of the urban, suburban or rural, and the “notion of the unitary, fixed subject” is really one of “instability of meaning” (p.9). Howey et al. (2000) report that the urban school – normally denigrated as an environment not conducive to learning – provides a “value added” richness of experience and diversity not found in the typical suburban or rural classroom (p.8). Despite these arguments for a more complex understanding of what urban means, there is a general agreement in the literature that the urban environment is one that faces a greater array of challenges than most others (Foote, 2005; Lee, 2005; Kindall-Smith, 2004; Patterson, Collins & Abbott, 2004; Williams et al., 2007).

The Urban School

What is true of the urban environment is that few middle to upper-middle class children reside there; the majority of young families above a certain socioeconomic line do not live in the central city. The white flight of the 1960s and 70s that pushed panicked middle-class Caucasian families from the urban landscape, continues to hover over cities (Grossman, 2008). With few exceptions, urban schools are primarily concerned with educating the children of the poor. Urban areas contend with the affects of poverty on young children more than any other geographical strata (Howey, et al., 1994). Poor children struggle with greater levels of homelessness, health issues, unstable family structures, and dimmer academic prospects (Kohler, 2007). Poverty “heightens the probability that school children will lack access to health care, become a victim of crime, become pregnant and drop out of school” (Lee, 2005, p.186). The urban school student is more likely than any other to receive subsidized meals and be referred for special
education services (Williams et al., 2007). He or she is also more likely to attend a bigger school with greater class sizes, a school building that may be older and in poor repair, and be a part of a school bureaucracy colored by internal mismanagement (Olson & Jerald, 1998).

Patterson et al. (2004) note that as disadvantaged districts struggle to overcome their challenges, they further must contend with state and federal mandates designed more for suburban and rural districts. It is far easier for more advantaged schools to provide certified teachers in every classroom and to meet the pressures of the standards imposed by high-stakes testing with accountability as they do not grapple with the seemingly insurmountable problems faced by urban districts both internally and externally (Friedman, 1991). The failure of urban districts to meet these standards contributes to a shared sense of powerlessness and shame within school and community. The demoralizing sense of difference from suburban counterparts serves as a conduit for alienation from long-term academic success (Forgione, 2004). And teachers – intimately connected to the academic achievement of students – feel the greatest strain of imposed “legislative pressures” to meet federal standards for achievement (Grayson & Alvarez, 2007, p.1351).

Urban School Personnel

More than 30% of teachers leave the profession after five years of work, and this number is higher in urban school settings (Smith & Smith, 2006). Along with problems such as difficult students and challenging legislative mandates, the teaching profession continues to be burdened by lower salaries, a lack of professional respect and high work-
loads (Schonfeld, 2001). Yet prospective teachers seem aware of these limitations. Grayson and Alvarez (2007) note that most educators enter the field “to make a positive difference in children’s lives” not to acquire material possessions (p.1350). The majority of teachers who abandon the profession do not cite salary or even workload as the chief determinant, but the workplace environment as a whole (Smith & Smith, 2006). School personnel characterize the negative work environment as one where chaos and disorganization reign, student violence is a continual problem and they feel no connection to institutional goals (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Lee, 2005).

Unfortunately, urban schools tend to be places where these very challenges play out every day; the schools that most need experienced and competent teachers and staff are least likely to attract them (Howey et al., 2000). Though Schorr (1988) and others have indicated that positive teacher-student relationships are the most valuable predictor of student success, urban schools are unable to hold on to their teachers for extended lengths of time (Foote, 2005). School staff members moving out of the urban system before developing strong relationships with students contribute to a “fragmentation” that is evident in other areas of the urban child’s life such as family, home and community and contributes to a “pattern of failed connections” (Schorr, 1988, p. 260). Michie (2005) notes how vital it is for staff members and children in the urban school to connect over the long-term, reporting how strong, “authentic caring” relationships between educator and student can change the trajectory of that student’s life (p.190). High staff turnover also makes it difficult for students to be referred for mental health or academic
intervention services; veteran personnel are the ones most able to identify students in need of extra assistance (Williams et al., 2007).

Urban school personnel report stress and emotional burnout at significantly higher rates than their suburban or rural counterparts (Haberman & Rickards, 1990; O’Donnell, Lambert & McCarthy, 2008; Patterson et al., 2004). While research on the failure of the urban school has tended to focus on how teachers are unprepared for the environment and inadequately serve students (Foote, 2005), less has been written about the stressors that contribute to high staff turnover and ways to improve overall staff mental health and functioning. There is agreement that the urban school environment is more demanding than others and requires staff with specialized training and a greater “resiliency” for the environment (Patterson et al., 2004, p. 3). Binns and Markow (1999) found that when school violence was assessed by law enforcement officers for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, 16% of school teachers stated they were victims of violence and over 90% of these attacks were from students or their parents. Smith and Smith (2006) indicate that urban education staff cite violence and safety as significant daily stressors and see it as a reflection of the surrounding community of which they are often not a part. Elliott, Hamburg, and Williams (1998) note that 56% of education personnel “do not feel safe” in their schools (p.25) and that fear is a motivating factor for the neglect of duties and failed connections with students. This cycle perpetuates the sense of alienation and isolation of school personnel from students and community.

Urban school personnel speak eloquently of simultaneously fearing and resenting students and their parents while feeling as if they are participants in the negative
stereotyping of urban schools. In their review of research interviews, Smith and Smith (2006) reported that urban educators and staff members expressed anxiety about reporting instances of school violence to police, friends and family because they did not want to contribute to negative perceptions -- and that this silence further exacerbated their stress levels. There are also the obvious physical, behavioral and emotional responses of living in fear in the workplace including insomnia or hyper-vigilance, anxiety, depression, poor concentration, and fatigue, to name just a few as well as long-term effects such as post traumatic stress disorder or acute stress disorder (Daniels, Bradley, & Hays, 2007).

Daniels et al. (2007) report that though there is recognition that urban school personnel may face these regular stressors, little is done to provide them with mental health services or support, and that these services are essential. Bernshausen and Cunningham (2001) write that though staff “resiliency development must become a major component of preservice programs” little has been done to incorporate this in professional education schools (p.3). Although it is difficult to imagine individuals in other professions performing adequately in an environment colored by fear, urban school personnel are expected to achieve the same high standards met by much safer and more privileged schools.

Milstein, Golaszewski and Duquette (1983) point to a lack of consistency and organization in the urban school as a contributor to the high stress of school personnel. They note urban school workers are often confused about the extent of their roles within these schools and feel “pulled in different directions by incompatible demands.”
ambiguities that increase anxieties and further erode relationships with students (p. 294). Further, Milstein et al. note that non-administration school personnel complain about being removed from the school’s “information network” due to the bureaucracy and micropolitics of the urban school environment. They normally are not invited to share in decision-making, contribute to the formation of goals, and thus feel they cannot fully participate in change or “obtain the information required to do their jobs” (p.297).

Schorr (1988) reports that the constant ebb and flow of top-down urban school intervention plans often ignore the realities of a school’s culture and the people who must implement the modifications. She notes that positive changes are most likely to occur when there is a shared sense of mission among administrators, support staff and most importantly, teachers – those staff members who have the greatest connection to students on a regular basis. She underscores that it is “teacher powerlessness” that is most detrimental to learning in disadvantaged schools, not “ineffective teaching methods” (p.234). Patterson et al. (2004) note that teachers strongly advocate for higher levels of authority and that the most resilient school personnel have seen it as “part of their responsibility to actively make things happen in areas where they didn’t exist” (p.4).

Urban school personnel also speak of parent relationships as an area of concern, highlighting dissatisfaction with how strongly they perceive parents are invested in the academic achievement of their children (Krei, 1998). A large percentage of urban school staff members come from communities very different from the urban environment. Foote (2005) reports that the majority are “middle-class, mono-cultural…in short, they are female and White” (p. 373). This initial disconnect translates into a feeling within the
parent community that staff are not fully committed to either community or school and do not fully understand the challenges they face (Smith & Smith, 2006). Thus, parents, teachers and support staff may face one another with some level of suspicion, due to unaddressed differences in class, race and authority. Fine (1993) notes that though schools may encourage parents to participate more in positive transformation, interventions often fail because both sides refuse to “address power struggles” and differing visions of change (p.684). O’Connor (2001) reports that schools and parents also often disagree about what constitutes an appropriate curriculum, with parents just wishing for an emphasis on basic academics over special classes. She quotes from one parent:

   Just teach them what they need to know to survive. That’s about it. Math, reading, writing…And to get along with others, which they do a lot here. They try. (p.182)

   Urban school personnel also complain they feel they are asked to provide levels of care to students that they believe should come primarily from parents, not schools, and that this involvement distracts them from academics. O’Connor (2001) writes of teachers reporting that they often must abandon curriculum to “play roles that are not strictly educational,” citing an interview where one respondent stated:

   We are going to have to be the mom, the nurse, the father, the psychologist, the doctor…whatever. We just can’t turn our back on these kids. The parents are not doing their job, many of them. They just don’t know how. It wasn’t modeled for them. They won’t be learning it. It’s the worst-case scenario. (p.185)
O’Connor also indicates parents feel restricted from becoming more involved in their schools because they feel unwelcome and misunderstood by staff and administration. She notes many parents did not have good school experiences of their own as children, and that their negative feelings about the school environment bleed into the interactions they have there as parents.

A Positive Psychology Framework

Certainly the positive psychology movement is trendy. Countless volumes on the subject by its founder, Dr. Seligman, and others have popped up in the self-help sections of bookstores and worked their way up literary best-seller lists. Popular news magazines like Time (2005) and U.S. News and World Report (2001, 2006) have had recent, exploratory articles on this new field of “happiness studies.” Positive psychology has its own website, authored by Seligman and administered by the University of Pennsylvania’s Positive Psychology Center, offering a variety of conferences, training opportunities, and resources for researchers, trainers, and teachers. Positive psychology seems to survive here as an almost individual entity devoid of human control or direction with its own executive summary, mission statement and goals. Interested students can earn a Masters of Applied Positive Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania – not the typical graduate degree in psychology – which licenses a student for nothing, but is promoted as a program that prepares students for “further study” and “innovative thinking” and the power to “transform a business or practice” (upenn.edu). By nature of its status as the purveyor of happiness, positive psychology is inherently attractive to the public, and this popularity increases its appeal to some researchers. Yet, outside of its trendiness, does
positive psychology have a legitimate role in psychological theory and scholarship? Moving beyond the clichéd and relatively subjective moniker of “happiness studies,” does positive psychology really provide people with tools to improve their personal lives and social institutions? Is it more than pop culture tips for “Happiness 101?” (Max, 2007).

**Defining Positive Psychology**

In 1998, Martin Seligman was elected president of the American Psychological Association (APA), a victory that was both welcome, but fraught with self-proclaimed concerns over his lifetime contributions to the field of psychology and the development of a lasting legacy (Seligman, 2002). Seligman’s past scholarship had centered on his theory of learned helplessness and aiding individuals in exerting and expanding personal control. His 1990 publication, *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*, details his commitment to battling human depression with “programs of learned optimism,” cognitive techniques designed to engage individuals in “non-negative thinking” (p.15). Seligman’s research on these cognitions indicated that humans are capable of reversing the course of depression by controlling the way they think – learning to engage in more positive self-statements. Seligman’s research in this area redefined how psychology addresses depression and created a chasm between behaviorist adoration of reward and punishment schemes – called “utter nonsense” by Seligman – and cognitivist’s commitment to an individual’s *mental life*. Cognitivists like Seligman believed in “consciousness – thinking, planning, expecting, remembering…mental events
are causal” (p.25). Human beings had the ability to change action and behavior by changing thought patterns, not through external punishments and rewards.

Despite playing a central role in the conceptualization of cognitivist theory, Seligman remained concerned with legacy and contribution in his chosen field. In his 2002 tome, *Authentic Happiness*, he writes of his struggle to find a mission for his work as APA president – a challenge that began with his fascination with the prevention of mental illness over treatment. In an overview of medical history, Seligman began to recognize that it was the prevention, rather than the treatment, of illness that had dramatically changed the course of human suffering. In his words, “cure is uncertain, but prevention is massively effective” (p.26).

However, Seligman found himself intellectually unsatisfied by mental health prevention models and intervention plans. As he floundered, looking for a more challenging approach to the management of mental health preventions, a conversation with his daughter inspired the initial thoughts that gave birth to positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2002). This conversation led Seligman to question the current, overall role of psychology both on an individual, client-based level, and as a contributor to human development as a whole. Did psychology exist to only identify and treat mental disorders? Or could psychology evolve into a science that identifies what makes people happy and encourages the pursuit of the same? Could this new conception of psychology help practitioners, researchers, and educators enforce resiliency in children and develop environments that encourage flourishing in all individuals?
The term *positive psychology* has existed within psychology for some time (Mruck, 2008). However, Seligman’s editorial collaboration with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi for the January 2000 positive psychology-devoted issue of *American Psychologist* is widely known as the rebirth of the movement in popular consciousness and psychological theory (Duckworth, Steen, & Seligman, 2005; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005; Sawka-Miller & Miller, 2007). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) defined positive psychology in relation to their conceptualization of the current state of psychology—a field devoted to pathology rather than the identification of traits and skills that “make life worth living” (p.5). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi urged psychology clinicians and theorists to focus less on finding the “weakness and damage” in individuals, communities and institutions, and to work more toward identifying “strengths and virtues” (p.7), arguing that this evolution in practice and paradigm would lead to the building of resiliency on countless social levels. If practitioners and researchers refocused their energies on the building of the three pillars of positive psychology—positive emotions, positive traits and positive institutions—then psychology as a field would reestablish the “balance” between pathology and positivity (Gable & Haidt, p.104; Seligman, 2005).

Seligman and others have stated that the aim of positive psychology is not to deny the negative in human and community functioning—mental illness does occur and bad things do happen—but rather to address a chasm in current research and practice. In their 2000 *American Psychologist* editorial introduction, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi formally defined the mission of positive psychology as:
The aim of positive psychology is to begin to catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities. (p.5)

Other theorists have broadened Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi’s (2000) original definition to include the pursuit and study of human “optimal functioning” (Gable & Haight, p.103), “effective functioning” (Sheldon & King, 2001, p.216) and “flourishing” (Fredrickson, 2001; Magyary, 2002, p.331). There is an overall acceptance that positive psychology stands as a commitment to finding “what works, what is right, and what is improving” (Sheldon & King, p.216) in individual and community experience.

**History of Positive Psychology**

Positive psychology was not conceptualized in a vacuum. Seligman admits his new field of inquiry was inspired by a joint dissatisfaction with the current clinical psychological emphasis on pathology, and an urge to continue the “third way” work of humanistic psychologists in a more empirical, less self-centered way (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Psychology’s beginning was dominated by the psychometric theory emphasized in the school environment (Reisman, 1991). With the influence of Freud and the rise of psychoanalytic theory, psychology moved toward psychoanalytic theory and its focus of psychopathology – a term defined by the identification of maladaptive behaviors and mental distress (Maddux, 2005).

This centering of clinical skill on deficit rather than strength was reinforced by the needs of the American government following World War II; the majority of articles delineating the rise of the positive psychology movement point to this period as the
moment psychology internalized the “disease model” and made it its primary mode of theory and practice (Duckworth et al., 2005; Gable & Haidt, 2005; Magyary, 2002; Seligman, 2000). The diagnosing and treatment of WW II veteran mental health issues became a significant source of funding for psychological research and employment for clinical practitioners. It was not a time for the identification of personal strengths and virtues – veteran resiliencies in the face of the negative circumstances of war -- but rather for diagnosing disease and becoming “pathologized” in one’s perception of psychological practice if one wanted steady employment (Maddux, 2005, p.14). Psychology had become “a branch of medicine concerned with illness” with practitioners “repairing weaknesses” rather than building client resiliencies (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p.7).

In *Authentic Happiness*, Seligman addressed his dissatisfaction with nurture-obsessed behaviorism, the movement that dominated psychological thought in the early to mid-20th century, and was eventually overthrown, along with Freud’s psychodynamic school, by the “cognitive revolution in psychology” (p.64). Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Seligman’s co-author on the *American Psychologist* “Positive Psychology: An Introduction” article, echoes his sentiments against behaviorism, calling his introduction to its methodology one of “a skeptical attitude and a concern for measurement,” further noting that psychologists in training were taught as if psychology “were a branch of statistical mechanics” (p.7). While rejecting behaviorism and psychodynamic theory, both Seligman and Csikzentmihalyi cautiously endorsed a connection between positive psychology and humanistic psychology – a movement that emerged in the mid-20th

Seligman acknowledges that positive and humanistic psychology share a common root, but writes humanistic psychology was a “sloppier, radical epistemology” that was never widely accepted in mainstream psychology and unable to achieve lasting influence on human or societal positive potential (p.275). Many humanistic psychologists place this same label -- albeit with a lighter touch -- on Seligman’s positive psychology, finding its dominating truth claims controlled by a logical empiricism that has brought acceptance and popularity to the movement both within the psychological community and in popular culture, but fails to understand human nature and human potential from multiple perspectives (McDonald & O’Callaghan, 2008, Taylor, 2001).

Gable and Haidt (2005) reiterate Seligman and Csikzentmihalyi’s admission that positive psychology as a study of optimal human functioning is not new theory. It has a lengthy and connected history that may reject Freud and Skinner, but incorporates aspects of William James’ work early 20th century work on “healthy mindedness,” Abraham Maslow’s theories on the study of the healthy over the sick, and Cowan’s studies of resiliency (p.104). Mruk (2008) argues that positive psychology must be divided by definition into two separate movements: humanistic positive psychology (HPP) – that of Maslow and Carl Rogers that is “grounded in existential and humanistic thinking” and embraces a variety of methodological approaches – and positivistic positive psychology (PPP), the new positive psychology promoted by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi that is “firmly rooted in the logical positivism of traditional scientific psychology” (p.144).
Mruk allows that both theories share a commitment to the study of full flourishing of human potential and experience, but divides them by historical root and research methodology – HPP being mainly qualitative in scope, and PPP “emphasiz(ing) the quantitative as a hallmark of its approach”(p.144).

Mruk’s (2008) theory is not alone in the research wilderness. A review of the literature on the connections between humanistic and positive psychology suggests a relationship colored by both similarity and challenge. Resnick et al. (2001) reiterate Mruk’s general theories of a separation between the two psychologies based on methodology and history, but also a strong connection based on a shared commitment to exploring human potential. Like Mruk, Resnick et al. suggest that humanistic psychology has been practicing as a “positive psychology” for some time, “echo(ing) themes expressed by humanistic psychologists over the past four decades” (2001, p.74). Yet, Resnick et al. express dissatisfaction with positive psychology’s over-reliance on primarily quantitative methodologies, noting that:

There is no question but that objective information about psychological and social systems can make important contributions to positive psychology. However, human beings are not just objects; they are also subjects. As conscious beings, they have a rich subjective inner experience composed of more than thoughts. The challenge is to find a methodology that is adequate to describe the full range of experience that is being human. (p.76)

In subsequent writings about methodologies in positive psychology, Seligman et al. (2005) review a variety of empirically validated interventions aimed at elevating
individual happiness and seem devoted to approaching positive psychology research from a strongly quantitative perspective. Seligman notes that positive psychology must be an “evidence-based practice” (p.410). However, in his introduction to Snyder and Lopez’s *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (2005), Seligman expresses admiration for the lost art of “narration” -- a qualitative approach -- within psychological practice. He states “that telling the stories of our lives, making sense of what otherwise seems chaotic…buffers against mental disorder,” but then goes on to caution against narration in research (p.7). Despite hints of appreciating more qualitative approaches, Seligman divorces his new positive psychology from the root of humanistic theory by method; the relationship between positive and humanistic psychology and their practitioners remains complicated. Positive psychology is defined by its founder as a psychology that embraces evidence-based, quantitative practice.

**The Three Pillars**

Seligman and Csikzentmihalyi (2000) divide the positive psychology movement into three core parts or pillars including that of the subjective level – positive emotion or experience – that of the individual level – positive traits or strengths – and that of the group or community level – the positive or enabling institution (Duckworth et al., 2005; Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 2005; Tan, 2006). These areas are further narrowed by a subject’s individual history – as individual experience and emotion from the past, present or about the future can influence emotional state, trait or institutional experience (Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000). Duckworth et al. (2005) expand Seligman and Csikzentmihalyi’s initial pillar framework to one of domains: the first
domain being “the pleasant life” and including positive emotion about experiences in the past, present and future, the second domain defined as “the engaged life” and characterized by the aforementioned individual strengths and strong character traits, and the third called “the meaningful life” which “entails belonging to and serving positive institutions” (p.635). These domains or pillars, while defined and discussed separately by Seligman, must work in tandem to create optimal human positivity. Seligman notes that to understand total “well-being,” we must understand how strengths, traits and enabling institutions link to positive emotions and vice-versa (2002, p.9); people who “orient their pursuits toward all three” are the most content (Seligman et al., 2005).

In Seligman’s study of the good life, the first domain -- emotions and subjective experiences that create the positive life -- is sparked by feelings desired by all humans: joy, delight, glee, contentment, pleasure, flow (Csikzentmihalyi, 1997) and all the basic emotions that make people happy. And why should people be happy? Besides the obvious desire for enjoyable human experiences, happiness appears to breed longevity – not only does one have happiness, but one’s happiness gives one a longer life – and a better, more productive life at that (Diener, 2000; Huppert, 2005; Salovney, Rothman, Detweiler & Steward, 2000). Seligman and other positive psychology theorists cite Danner, Snowdon & Friesen’s 2001 study of nuns as source material for the pursuit of the study positive emotion. Danner et al. evaluated journals handwritten by Catholic nuns in their early 20s, and determined that those nuns who heavily used expressions of “positive emotional content” tended to live longer than those who did not, leading the researchers to speculate that positive emotions in youth might have a “powerful relationship to
longevity” (p.811). Seligman (2002) also cites Harker and Keltner’s 2001 study of positive emotional facial expression in college-age women, where researchers determined that those women who appeared happier in their college yearbook photos tended score higher on well-being assessments years later, suggesting that early positivity connects to greater career and romantic satisfaction – a happier future overall.

What maximizes positive emotion and experience? To some extent, humans are prisoners of their genetic “set point” for happiness, circumstance, and socioeconomic levels, but Seligman notes that all of these effects can be influenced by the way humans think about specific circumstances, engage in positive experiences, and reflect about the past and future. Individuals can improve their “set points” by making regular efforts not to dwell on negative events from the past or engaging such emotions as hope and optimism about the future (2002, 2005). Seligman also suggests that there is significant empirical research for the view that one’s emotions – the broiling rage you may feel at being fired from your job, for example – create one’s cognitions – your thoughts of strangling your boss. Psychology as a field continues to debate this chicken or egg quandary of whether thinking creates emotion or emotion creates thought. Seligman writes in Authentic Happiness:

The imperialistic Freudian view claims that emotion always drives thought, while the imperialistic cognitive view claims that thought always drives emotion. The evidence, however, is that each drives the other at times. (p.65)

Like others, (Huppert, 2005; Frederickson & Joiner, 2002), Seligman chooses no side on this issue but allows for both approaches to contribute to the positive psychology
movement. He states that the real question for theorists is “under what conditions does emotion drive thinking, and under what conditions does thinking drive emotion” (2002, p.65)? To this end, Snyder and Lopez’s *Handbook of Positive Psychology* dedicates sections to both emotion-focused and cognitive-focused approaches (2005).

Of note in emotion-based approaches is Fredrickson’s “broaden-and-build” theory (2001, 2005) which determines that particular emotions – including love, pride, joy and interest, among others – are able to “broaden” a subject’s “thought-action repertoire” (basically, the thoughts and actions that come to mind when experiencing an emotion, positive or negative), leading to increased “physical and social resources” (2001, p.219). In layman’s terms, Frederickson is arguing that just as negative emotions served an evolutionary purpose – feeling fear helped our ancestors escape the drooling tiger – positive emotions may have provided an equal evolutionary advantage: feeling joy, pride, or interest led our ancestors to engage in play (building cognitive strength and social resources), share with others (building social relationships), or learn something new (building cognitive and/or physical resources). Frederickson’s theory connects with positive psychology in that it promotes positive emotions as an evolutionary need much as negative emotions have proven to be (2005).

In part, Seligman’s identification of the second pillar of psychology as positive character traits or strengths is a response to the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*’s heavy emphasis on the negative or disordered in human functioning rather than the positive (2005; Maddux, 2005). Park et al. (2004) identified 24 differing character strengths involved in human
fulfillment, found across cultures, measurable, and “morally valued” that can be pursued through research and intervention for the application of positive psychology (Seligman et al., 2005, p.411). These strengths or traits were then organized into a positive psychology companion volume to the DSM entitled *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (CSV; Peterson & Seligman, 2004) in the hope that psychology might adopt a more balanced approach to assessment and treatment. Six major human virtues were indentified and said to be validated across cultures – wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence – with each virtue then broken down into the aforementioned 24 character strengths or traits with accompanying definitions (Seligman et al., 2005; Park et al., 2004). Seligman cautions that the developed classifications are not “all-or-nothing” in personal scope, but exist in humans in varying degrees and can be established through “reliable and valid assessment strategies,” some of which he runs off his own positive psychology website (Seligman et al., 2005, p.411).

Why is it necessary to identify one’s personal strengths within the context of positive psychology? It might be suggested that the process of determining one’s strengths – in relation to one’s areas of weakness – might not be a route to happiness but rather a quick path to self-criticism and self-defeat, but Seligman suggests otherwise. The identification of one’s personal strengths – be they any of the 24, including such traits as self-regulation, love and hope– helps one find ways to build on them and incorporate them into the major categories of life such as work, relationships or leisure time activities. Seligman posits that once an individual has found his or her core or signature strengths through an assessment – the VIA Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS; Peterson &
Seligman, 2005) he has placed on his website and in *Authentic Happiness* --that individual will be empowered to use those strengths as much as possible, thus improving the traits themselves and the individual’s overall quality of life (2002). Seligman et al.’s (2005) randomized controlled trials on the use of the VIA-IS and subsequent intervention programs utilizing happiness exercises including the use of signature strengths, showed increased post-test happiness scores and decreased depression scores for a half-year period. With the inclusion of a gratitude exercise for increased positive emotion, subjects also showed higher levels of happiness.

The third pillar, the positive institution, is conceptualized as research and interventions that work to improve communities at the macro level (Seligman, 2002; Luthans, 2002). Here, the *community* can be defined from the small to the large in scope: organizations, businesses, schools, civic groups, towns, cities, to the broader concepts of culture or country – any boundary that creates a group sharing similar needs, goals or values. Institutions such as work places and schools have the potential to highly influence human fulfillment and happiness; past studies have shown that individual life satisfaction may be strongly influenced by work environment (Kelloway & Barling, 1991) and researchers on school climate and student resiliency are increasingly studying the school as a positive environment and how this can impact academic achievement (Sawka-Miller & Miller, 2007). Despite this, an exhaustive literature review into Seligman’s third pillar generated little substantive research in comparison to that for positive experience and positive traits; positive institution research seems an area ripe for further study.
Like Seligman’s first two domains, the framework of the positive institution is deeply affected by the evolution of the other two. Workplaces have the potential to become more productive when workers experience positive emotion and engage their signature strengths in meaningful ways (Seligman, 2002). In “Positive Emotions and Upward Spirals in Organization,” Barbara Frederickson continues her argument that positive emotions create the flourishing of human potential, and that the fostering of positive feeling within the work environment may “contribute to optimal organizational functioning” (p.164). Frederickson notes that her broaden-and-build theory can be applied in the work environment to create an “upward spiral” of improved employee emotional and cognitive functioning that influences other employees and company output (p.172).

Engaging signature strengths in the workplace also has the potential to reverberate throughout the institution. Seligman (2002) argues that the happiest, most fulfilled workers are those who find work that “deploy(s) their strengths and virtues every day” until work becomes not just a paycheck but also “a calling” (p.166). Turner, Barling and Zacharatos (2005) ask for workplaces to allow employees greater autonomy in decision-making, more challenging tasks and increased opportunities for socializing, thus engaging their strengths in order to build self-efficacy and “competence” (p.717). Csikszentmihalyi (1997) has written extensively on the capacity of humans to engage in flow – a time of intense concentration on a specific task when one is completely oblivious to outside distraction – and how the work environment is uniquely primed to encourage individuals to achieve this positive state with challenging tasks and clear
goals, and thus reap the benefits of a more productive workforce. Continued research may show that institutions have the ability to increase overall functioning simply by fostering positive emotions in workers, students, or volunteers and employing their strengths in the best, most productive ways. In turn, these positive places are capable of inspiring “positive civic virtues…better citizenship…responsibility, altruism, civility…and a strong work ethic” (Luthans, 2002).

The Positive Institution/School

Though his writings hint at broader implications of the positive institution, Seligman’s view of his third pillar is mainly conceptualized around the workplace, and how to improve work conditions and employee satisfaction in such ways as to promote worker strengths and traits, building positive emotions and thus an overall positive institution (2002). Seligman emphasizes work that plays to individual strengths, the view of employment as not a paycheck but a “calling” and “considerably more personal control over work,” or the encouragement of shared decision-making between all levels of staff (p.181).

Workforce development theorists applied his ideas to organizational behavior, suggesting that managers promote positivity and strengths in the work environment rather than continual negative critique. Luthans (2002) indicates that psychological constructs such as optimism or hope can be encouraged in the workplace as part of a “positive organizational behavior” that will improve productivity, retention, and the overall resiliency of a staff (p.701). Frederickson (2003) links her “broaden-and-build” theory of positive emotion to organizations, suggesting that the happiness experienced by
individual workers can “be transformational and fuel upward spirals toward optimal individual and organizational functioning” (p.1). Clearly, positive psychology is applied in the work setting not just to improve a company’s bottom line, but to optimize the experiences of all employees at all hierarchal levels, with one success leading to another.

Though it is conceptualized in many ways, the American public school is still a workplace, albeit one tightly controlled by both public scrutiny and legal mandate. Public school workers complain of greater stress and burnout than employees in other professions, and these challenges are often further intensified by geographical location and the varying socioeconomic levels of neighborhoods (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; O’Donnell, Lambert & McCarthy, 2008; Smith & Smith, 2006). Particularly in urban settings, school environments often emphasize individual and group failure and negativity over successes (Schorr, 1988). Murrell (2001) notes that rising accountability standards have done little to promote achievement in the most vulnerable populations and have, in fact, created greater stressors for educators. School environments are often chaotic and mismanaged, subject to political sway rather than clear, shared goal formation between administrators and staff (Marks & Lewis, 1997; Milstein, Galaszewski & Duquette, 1983). Support staff such as counselors and psychologists complain of overwhelming case loads and referral needs that force them into a continual role of testing and placement rather than intervention and strength-building (Lee, 2005; Nastasi, 2000; Sink & Cher, 2008). Overall, the current American public school continues to be described as challenged by a host of issues including declining public aid, poor teacher and support staff retention and rising economic disparity:
The student population entering America’s classrooms is more challenging than at any time in recent history. More children live in poverty, in single parent homes, or in homes where parents have to work long hours just to maintain a minimal standard of living. Increasing numbers of students are entering public schools without having learned basic social/socialization skills. Teachers are forced to contend with tremendous diversity in the behavior, value patterns, concepts of right and wrong and skill levels of the students they teach. (NASP, p.2)

It is arguable that very few workplaces ask employees to navigate such complex and challenging webs of legal, social, hierarchal and political relationships as those found in the public schools.

To date, the majority of literature concerning the positive school – most of which is found in school psychology research – has focused on the school context and its relationship to the child rather than its affect on school staff, parents or its connection to the surrounding community (Miller, Nickerson, Chafouleas, & Osborne, 2008). Nevertheless, some theorists have begun to integrate research into the positive school with Bronfenbrenner’s (1989) layers of systematic influence: seeing the entire ecological system and its affect on the child at the mesosystem (school and family), exosystem (extended relationships) and macrosystem (laws and culture) levels rather than just successes in smaller areas such as math or social skills – areas no less relevant to an individual child, but less influential on an entire school system. With this model, the question becomes what can create a positive school environment without discounting the
contributions of school staff, parents, the surrounding community, the politics of both community and state? This question becomes especially relevant for practitioners wanting to influence the positive psychology of an entire school community, where the ecology of the system cannot be ignored (Clonan et al., 2004). Obviously it is more than challenging for the average practitioner to influence outlying legislative barriers to change, but school psychologists, counselors and social workers can serve as catalysts for systems-level change at the mesosystem and exosystem levels (Fagan & Sheridan, 2000; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000).

**Toward a Positive School Ecology**

It seems as if everyone in education has an opinion about what makes a school positive, and the views are not always in sync. There is a general sense that high test scores and graduation rates make a school successful; certainly those schools that demonstrate achievement in these areas are well regarded. Others argue that specialized programs in the arts or sports make a school positive or that providing students with creativity training or programs to enhance science skills makes all the difference. Many theorists cite parent involvement as the key to school success. But the perceptions of the students and staff of a school may be what determine the true positivity of a school environment, and their views are arguably the most important. Sawka-Miller and Miller (2007) write of the importance of student and staff perceptions of the whole school experience, noting the strong relationship between “perceptions of school satisfaction and academic achievement” as well as increased mental health (p.27).
What, then, really contributes to positive school ecology? Perceived not just by the outside community, but also by the individuals who learn and work in the school itself? Newmann, Smith and Rutter (1989) indicate that school organizational factors strongly affect staff alienation and overall school community. Newmann et al. state:

To improve the education of all students, schools must try to nourish certain perceptions, attitudes, and perspectives that all school staff hold in common. It is important not only to help individual staff members become technically more effective, but deliberately to build the collective school ethos. (p.221)

Newmann et al. cite the aforementioned issues of staff collegiality and a commitment by administrators to encourage staff self-efficacy and personal goal formation, but also highlight the supportive role of key administrators. They must offer “help, support, and recognition” which will build “a greater sense of unity and cooperation in the total enterprise.” In particular, it is the principal who sets the tone for the entire school ecology; Newmann et al. indicate that it is this leadership that is most highly correlated with “efficacy and community” (p.236).

Educational researchers have also cited positive school contributors such as the mentoring of new teachers (Kindall-Smith, 2004), the encouraging of staff volunteerism and the teaching of “peace-building skills” (Harvey, 2007, p.12) and a greater commitment of school counselors and psychologists to advocacy on behalf of teachers and parents (Lee, 2005). Sink and Edwards (2008) write of the emergence of a school-as-community movement in academic literature in which organization, administration, curricula and support staff (counselors, social workers and school psychologists) all must
work in tandem with clearly identified, shared goals to aid teachers in their classroom work and student behavioral control.

Martin Seligman’s positive psychology movement with its third pillar mission of the positive institution (Seligman, 2005) echoes this concept of the school as community. Seligman argues that the cultivation of positive institutions such as schools, workplaces and communities will help propel optimum human functioning and an overall life satisfaction. Yet, despite the popularity of the positive psychology movement, there has been little research in the area of the school as a positive institution (Gable & Haight, 2005). A review of the recent *Handbook of Positive Psychology in the Schools* (2009) has little literature on the positive school ecology, but instead focuses mainly on the development of the positive student rather than this broader educational context. School psychology literature has begun to address the school ecology and apply Seligman’s theories; Sawka-Miller and Miller (2007) link positive behavioral support to the school as a “positive institution” (p.28). Clonan, Chafouleas, McDougal and Riley-Tillman (2004) indicate that school psychologists have a direct responsibility to help promote a positive school institution through consultation practice and intervention “across multiple environments” including the school itself, families and overall community (p.104).

**Hope**

In Western thought, the construct of hope begins at the bottom of Pandora’s box, which is snapped shut before humankind suffers its ill effects of engaging in an optimism for a future which may not come to pass. Greek mythology suggests Pandora returns later to the box and sets hope free, forcing humankind to face the quandary of the dual role of
hope: the despair of unrequited optimism for mortal life versus the only thing that sustains life when all else is gone. Hope appears in Christian theology as one of the three cardinal virtues – hope, faith and charity – elevated above other traits as a spiritual gift from the Christian God. Historically, philosophers and theorists have cautioned against the false hope of cure-all medicines or miracle life-enhancers. It was not until the 1950s that hope was studied with any academic rigor and granted a more formal scientific definition in psychology as “positive expectation for goal fulfillment” (Snyder, 2000, p.4). Hope reappears with the advent of health and humanistic psychology in the late 1970s as a construct that might aid patients in recovery from disease or serve as a deterrent to health concerns (Luthans, 2002). It becomes popular for study along with other cognitive-motivational constructs such as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and optimism (Seligman, 1986), but with its own validity and definition as an internal, self-controlled emotion (Magaletta & Oliver, 1999; Snyder, 2000).

In 1991, Snyder and fellow researchers published a specific definition of hope that did not significantly differ with early psychological studies on hope construct but supplied empirically supported assessment measures. Snyder et al. (1991) speculated that hope does involve the aforementioned expectation for goal fulfillment, concluding that hope can be defined as “a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy) and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)” (Snyder, Irving & Anderson, 1991, p.287). Snyder (2000) noted his hope theory contrasts with Albert Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy in that it engages both agency and pathways thinking equally, whereas self-efficacy evidences some pathways...
thinking, but relies heavily on agency cognitions. Snyder further contrasts hope theory with Martin Seligman’s optimistic attributional style (1991) where an individual’s goal is to distance him/herself from unpleasant events in the past. In hope theory, one’s goals are characterized as positive expectations for the future (Snyder, 1995, 2000). Specifically, Snyder identifies his theory as cognitive, motivational in model (Snyder et al., 2003) and differentiates it from older, comparable theories by emphasizing its advantageous “amenability to the development of a measurement instrument” (Snyder, 1995).

In his 1994 tome, *The Psychology of Hope*, Snyder summarizes his conception of hope theory, his empirical findings, and his illustrations of hope theory in action in a variety of environments. He states his definition of hope theory as:

Hope is the sum of mental willpower and waypower that you have to reach your goals… Goals are any objects, experiences, or outcomes that we imagine or desire in our minds… Willpower is the driving force in hopeful thinking… a reservoir of determination and commitment… waypower reflects the mental plans or road maps that guide hopeful thought (p.7).

Snyder posits that true hope is not a Pollyanna-ish optimism for the future, but rather an empirical formula that includes the identification of goals, the mental capability to determine how to achieve those goals, and the energy to carry out one’s goal-achieving plans. Informed by this theory, Snyder developed a series of hope scales – trait hope, state hope, and child hope -- all designed to identify one’s hopeful or goal-directed behavior in quantifiable terms (Snyder, 1995; Snyder et al., 1996). Research on the stability of hope as a trait has determined that it remains relatively constant over time but
can vary significantly during times of challenge and/or stress (Feudtner et al., 2007) and may also vary according to specific life domains such as love, academics, family life, etc. (Snyder, 2002). Snyder (2002) cautions that despite possible variation in life domain, individuals with overall high hope are buffered against domain-linked stressors. While personality factors can affect individual ability to build hope skill, individuals who receive hope-building interventions and support during challenging times can significantly maintain strong hope levels regardless of domain or stressor (Lopez et al., 2000). In response, Snyder has gone on to develop a series of articles, books, and cognitive-based interventions on hope development and sustainment for both children and adults (McDermott & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 2000). Using Snyder’s hope theory and empirically validated assessments, hope has been identified as a major component of academic achievement and social success (Onwuegbuzie, 1999), sport achievement (Curry, Ruby, Rehm, Snyder & Cook, 1997), and work success (Luthans, 2002; Snyder, 2000).

Like Seligman, Snyder has been identified as one of the major contributors to the positive psychology movement and the concept of this hope seems a natural fit with a positive psychology (Cheavens, Feldman, Woodward, & Snyder, 2006; Luthans, 2002). Seligman and Csikzentmihalyi identify hope as a central player at the subjective level of positive human experience in their introduction to the positive psychology movement; hope is equated with optimism as one of the necessary components for a positive view of the future (2000). Seligman expands on this concept in *Authentic Happiness*, noting that
“optimism and hope are quite well-understood, they have been objects of thousands of empirical studies, and best of all, they can be built” (2002, p.83).

With vast experience studying optimism, Seligman offers opportunities for his readers to test their levels of optimism but has no separate scale for hope and, unlike Snyder, does not strongly differentiate between the two (Snyder, 1995; 2000). Seligman insists that it is his construct of learned optimism that “brings hope into the laboratory” and does not identify goals, agency or pathways as hope components, claiming that hope “depends on two dimensions taken together. Finding permanent and universal causes of good events along with temporary and specific causes for misfortune is the art of hope” (p.92). However, Seligman clearly includes hope as one of the necessary components of his first pillar of positive psychology even if his conception of hope does not appear reflective of Snyder’s theory.

Hope is further identified by Seligman as one of the 24 character strengths that contribute to an individual’s positivity at the second pillar level of positive psychology (2000). Here again, hope is not separated from optimism or, in Seligman’s words, a “future-mindedness,” but is seen as part of a trinity that “represent a positive stance toward the future” (p.158). Yet later, as one of the co-authors of the 2007 “Strengths of Character, Orientations to Happiness, and Life Satisfaction,” (Peterson et al., 2007) Seligman names hope as one of only five positive traits that “more robustly predict happiness and life satisfaction” (p.149). According to Peterson et al., hope – along with love, gratitude, curiosity, and zest – is a strength that contributes to life satisfaction and contentment more than other human traits, regardless of the three happiness
“orientations” provided by Seligman’s *Authentic Happiness* (pleasure/hedonism, engagement/flow or meaning) (p.153). Peterson et al. suggest that this positioning of hope centers it as a strength that creates a fuller, more flourishing life for an individual on numerous levels. Peterson et al. claim that hope may be a “worthy target” for positive psychology interventions that build “enduring happiness” (p.154). Again, no mention of Snyder’s hope theory is made in this article, though his conception of hope is linked with Seligman’s character strength model in Valle et al.’s study of hope as a psychological strength in adolescents (2006) and Cheavens et al.’s research on the building of client hope levels as clinical psychotherapy intervention (2006).

Hope also plays a role at the group level of positive psychology – the positive institution. In Snyder’s article contribution to his edited *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, he comments that hope theory has the potential to be applied at the group level in a variety of contexts:

Hope theory could be applied to help build environments where people can work together to meet shared goals. Whether it is a business, city council, state legislature, or national or international organization, there is enormous potential in working together in the spirit of hope. (p.268)

More specifically, Snyder argues with Feldman (2000), that hope is not just an individual construct, but can be expanded to be “nurtured for the greater good of individuals and whole societies” (p.389). Snyder and Feldman describe the higher hope individual as one who is better able to contribute to a society as a collective thinker, more optimistic individual, with potentially greater physical and mental health overall and the
ability to better socialize with others – thus, building hope at the individual level inevitably contributes to the flourishing of society at both micro and macro levels. Snyder and Feldman -- in a more political statement -- also posit that American society lacks the shared, meaningful goals that push individuals to make optimum contributions toward collective well-being; they note that typical American commitments to money and competition due little to foster community growth, though they may serve as individual goals. Further, Snyder and Feldman underscore the affect of hopeful role models on children, citing Snyder’s 1994 study linking the “presence of caring, attentive, and positive role models” to higher hope in children (p. 392) – a “presence” that must be encouraged in schools and day care centers with the advent of higher salaries for teaching and caring professionals, paid maternity leave, and flex-time for working families (McDermott & Snyder, 2000). Hope Theory can further be expanded to the education of older students: Snyder et al. (2005) posit that college level courses in hopeful thinking could increase the overall resiliency of students in college and beyond. Snyder et al. (2003) further suggests that the presence of “caring coaches” who embody traits of high hope thinking can increase such resilient thought patterns in students.

In the work environment, Snyder’s Hope scales have identified employees most vulnerable to burnout and less resilient to workplace stressors (Snyder, 1994), a valuable tool for interventions for employees in such high stress work environments as nursing, urban school teaching, or human services (Luthans, 2002; Simmons & Nelson, 2001). Snyder and Feldman (2000) have suggested that a low hope work environment could be avoided if leadership would encourage workers to share in the collective identification of
in institutional goals and also allow workers to achieve greater work-life balance (2000). They argue that workers who are pushed to engage in the planning (pathways) of collective goals are more likely to be invested in their work and will perform at higher levels; work environments that further engage worker “agency” or motivation to complete goals are those where workers take responsibility for their worker and are granted greater “freedom” and are not “micro-managed” or overly controlled (Snyder & Feldman, 2000, p. 4000). In short:

- Work environments need to be set up so as to maximize the worker’s sense of pursuing meaningful goals while gaining satisfaction in doing tasks well. To the degree that managers and employees can establish environments of hope, not only will productivity increase, but employees will maintain the high levels of hope necessary to continue performing well. (p.405)

**Hope and the School Psychologist**

Traditionally, the role of the school psychologist has been one that centers primarily on the cognitive and academic assessment of referred children. More formal definitions of the roles and responsibilities of the school psychologist vary and are influenced by legislative and bureaucratic context. The 2004 passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) identified the role of the school psychologist at the federal level as one of administering and interpreting assessments, consulting with parents and teachers, planning and managing psychological services, and developing behavioral interventions. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) calls the school psychologist a professional who:
helps children and youth succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. They collaborate with educators, parents, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments for all students that strengthen connections between home and school. [nasponline.org]

In its “Petition for the Reaffirmation of the Specialty of School Psychology,” (1998) The American Psychological Association (APA) reiterated that school psychologists are involved in assessment, but also clarified that the profession was involved in broader school contexts such as “[intervention] at the individual and system level, and develop, implement, and evaluate preventative programs” (p.8). Aside from definitions, the reality of the average school psychologist’s workday is mainly one of assessment. Fagan & Wise (2000) report that school psychologists spend over 50% of work-based time in psychoeducational assessment with the rest of the time allocated for consultation with teachers and the development and implementation of interventions with teachers and students. It is important to note that school psychologists serving in schools in lower socioeconomic neighborhoods report spending greater amounts of time in special education assessment than do those who work in higher-income school settings (Curtis, Chesno-Grier, & Hunley, 2004).

In part responding to recent changes in psychological trend and practice, school psychology practice research has recently pushed for a paradigm shift away from traditional methods of service delivery to more comprehensive, universal modes of care. Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) argue that traditional school psychology has been overly influenced by the medical model of professional practice – a methodology that focuses
attention on the diagnosis of individual pathologies rather than on preventative practice or
the building of strengths and resilience. This model “provides an inadequate working
model for our [school psychology’s] future” (p.486) and does little to develop the core
relationships between practitioners, teachers and parents that are necessary in the creation
of positive, systems-level change. Saluting the strength of the school ecology, Clonan et
al. (2004) note that the field must recognize that the entire school environment may be
modified to reduce stressors on staff and students as well as build competency. The
authors also note that school psychology interventions and consultations can be focused
on this positivity for all students, rather than just those who are referred for assessment or
intervention. Nastasi (2000) moves the systems approach one step further by suggesting
that school psychology practitioners engage in a “comprehensive health care” for all
children that recognizes the general ecology of the child by forming relationships and
“integrating educational, health or mental health, and social services across agencies and
professional disciplines” (p.541). Nastasi envisions that the school psychologist no
longer works in isolated assessment but teams with outside professionals to create a
network of comprehensive care for the student.

School psychology’s paradigm shift away from the pathology model to a more
comprehensive, universal level of care is consistent with educational research linking
Seligman’s conception of the positive institution with the positive school. Not
surprisingly, school psychology research literature on this topic argues for the school
psychologist playing a central role in this evolution, moving schools away from an
historical focus on academic and behavioral problems and pathologies to prevention and
resilience building (Terjesen, Jacofsky, Froh, & DiGuisepppe, 2004). Chafouleas and Bray (2004) note that school psychologists are the in best position to manage successful intervention strategies for school children across multiple contexts. Not trapped by the classroom and often familiar with local social services, school psychologists may be able to create positive webs of support for children that unite school resources with medical and family services and community links, creating what Chafouleas and Bray call the essential “continuity of intervention” (p.4).

In most school settings, school psychologists are unique for their greater leadership roles on intervention or service determination teams. Terjesen et al. (2004) indicate that school psychologists can use this leadership role to assist teachers and parents in finding a common, more positive language to describe the potentials of a child rather than concentrating solely on possible deficits. Here, too, the school psychologist can encourage parents and teachers to reinforce positive behaviors rather than focusing only on banishing bad behaviors or addressing academic deficits. School psychologists may thus be able to serve as catalysts for the creation of the positive school team, a central theme in positive school literature (Bizumic et al, 2009; Miller et al, 2008).

In her vision of the 21st century school psychologist, Nastasi (2000) asks that practitioners “assume responsibility for bringing together administrators, teachers, other mental health personnel, parents and students” to address problems and create solutions (p.543). Miller et al. (2008) also underscore that the school psychologist’s personal attitude toward the school and utilization of positive strengths such as hope, optimism, conscientiousness or enthusiasm can serve as a model for others, particularly if the school
psychologist makes him/herself highly visible as recommended. Akin-Little, Little, and Delligatti (2004) suggest that school psychologists both model positive behaviors such as hope and optimism for students and teachers and also engage in Caplan’s (1963) consultee-centered model of case consultation in order to help teachers learn and promote optimistic and hope-building activities in the classroom.

**Training for Resiliency**

As gatekeepers to educational staff positions, it is arguable that education-training (for teachers, school counselors, school psychologists, principals, etc.) programs can have a significant impact on the resiliency of these workers in urban school environments.

Much of the academic literature regarding the training of the resilient urban school practitioner has centered on teachers, rather than other staff members such as counselors, administrators or school psychologists. Despite this, some general principles learned from teacher training programs can be applied to the study programs of all graduate students in urban education programs. First, researchers focus on the necessity of graduate programs to identify those students who may best be able to serve an urban population prior to their entry to training. Murrell (2000) suggests that education programs work with city communities to reach urban students who might consider teaching, counseling or school psychology as a career, thus *growing* professionals who are already familiar with the urban environment and its challenges. Murrell notes that this process has the potential to serve the dual role of finding educators who are more prepared for the urban school, as well as professionals who may culturally or ethnically reflect the student population. Murrell suggests resilient urban educators actually reflect a “cultural competence” that
may not be present in most educational program graduates (p.345). Further, these community educators may be more likely to live in the neighborhoods in which they work, addressing the common criticism that urban educators simply drive away at night without committing to the urban community.

In their recommendations for urban teaching preparation practices in the Milwaukee city schools, Howey et al. (1994) suggest strong university strategies for recruiting minority teachers. They detail a “pipeline strategy” in which talented urban students are shuttled into a high school education “academy” where they begin the process of training for education careers and receiving mentoring from skilled, experienced educators (p.13). This strategy, coupled with financial incentives from partnering universities or colleges would then address the significant dearth of quality minority teachers and support staff in city schools.

But what of the training itself? Researchers in urban education bemoan the lack of quality programs committed to urban school education preparation (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Melnick & Zeichner, 1997); little training addresses core resiliency issues such as the mental health of graduates. Graduates of educational programs are likely to enter teaching, counseling, school psychology, or school administration with little, if any, training in cultural sensitivity or knowledge of social inequalities. Most preparation programs offer few field placements in urban settings, and those that are available are rarely accepted by students (Sleeter, 2001). Burns, Grande, and Marble (2008) report that access to urban field-based experiences are critical, regardless of the type of training program a student may enter due to the instability of the education job market:
The realities of the job market may force candidates to seek employment in urban districts whether or not they want to and whether or not they are prepared to do so. (p. 103)

Burns et al. note that too much urban experience may keep students from applying for jobs in the urban market, but that adequate field experience and the essentials of “dialogue and increased understanding” through coursework and conversation with faculty can help students develop resiliencies necessary for more challenging conditions (p.103).

Exposure to the urban environment for the education graduate student is not without its potential drawbacks. Haberman (2004) cautions that it is imperative that faculty allow for a harsh honesty when discussing the challenges of urban schools with students as this is more likely to adequately prepare students and contributes to long-term placement retention. Foote (2005) notes programs that advocate field training may “shock” students, leading to reduced self-efficacy, and that these experiences can lead to a “reinforcement of negative stereotypes” (p. 374). She notes few higher education programs incorporate ways to diminish these problems and build a student resiliency through “provision of appropriate support, preparation, and reflection in combination with the field experience” (p. 377). In other words, graduate programs hoping to train for resilience in the urban setting must offer clear, shared goals, supportive atmosphere and high faculty and supervisor involvement that includes frank discussion. Most educators are not able to commit to such standards of support for graduate students. Such support
may require an extensive faculty time commitment and can pose geographical or fiscal challenges.

Regardless of focus, Bernshausen and Cunningham (2001) urge all education preservice programs – including those training professional staff -- to adopt resiliency preparation as a central training goal, focusing on developing student identity in five key areas: competency (building knowledge, trust), a sense of belonging (collegiality and support), usefulness (role), potency (ability to impact decision making, goal formation), and finally, optimism – which comes when an individual “reaches a sustainable level of resiliency” (p.6). Freedman and Appleman (2008) also report that collegiality and support may be central to an education graduate’s success. They detail the evolution of the Multicultural Urban Secondary English (MUSE) graduate program of the University of California, Berkeley in its attempt to train teachers to serve the most disadvantaged students in poor, urban schools. Teacher training programs like MUSE provide ongoing faculty support and collegiality to graduates while they remain in the program. But after the program ends and faculty moves on to new students, MUSE’s training begins to fail graduates. Freedman and Appleman argue that these graduates need continual social and professional support to succeed and remain resilient in the urban school. They report that while a higher percentage of MUSE graduates continue to teach in urban environments, "education programs may be able to provide a partial but not full solution to the problems facing urban education” (p.111).

Conclusion
Though it is clear in student development literature that urban-focused graduate education programs are approaching the theme of building resilience in students, few studies, if any, mention any focus on the mental health needs of graduate students entering the urban education market. While resiliency is always mentioned as an overarching theme for student development, few specific constructs – such as increasing a student’s optimism or hope – are approached. School psychology graduate programs that incorporate aspects of resiliency training in areas like hope -- vital and present at all three levels of positive psychology’s pillars of resiliency -- may contribute to the young school psychologist’s ability to motivate teachers, staff, parents and youth, serve as models of hopeful behavior, and contribute to the positive school institution overall. School psychology’s paradigm shift towards a more comprehensive level of care (Nastasi, 2000) endorses such an approach; theorists advocate that school psychologists shift from a model of pathology to one where they serve as models for positive behaviors and consultants to educators on manifesting these behaviors in the classroom (Akin-Little, Little, and Delligatti, 2004).

Snyder’s Hope theory suggests that hope theory is an appropriate model for the school environment; Snyder writes of school psychologists serving as “caring coaches” of hopeful behavior in the school (Snyder et al., 2003). Hope theory suggests that workers who exhibit high levels of hope are more resilient to work-related stress, better able to perform well and contribute to overall productivity (Synder and Feldman, 2000). Frederickson’s research (2001) on positive upward spirals in work institutions underscores how positive emotions like hope can begin with a single individual and
reverberate throughout a work environment until it permeates the entire system. School psychology programs that can produce graduates with such resiliencies have a greater chance of promoting lasting effects for students in urban environments.
Definitions

For most researchers in the sciences, the phrase *quantitative research* is redundant; there is nothing that exists in methodology outside of statistical techniques that identify difference, a hypothesis that shadows a clear outcome, and the generalization of data from a sample group to a population. Quantitative research has the neat linear flow of “theory -> hypothesis -> data collection -> analysis -> conclusion” that is accepted across sciences and permeates graduate studies in research methodology (Blee, 2004, p.55). Taught primarily as logical positivism, this research is objective in the Enlightenment-derived sense of the term. Facts are not “malleable observations but…unbreakable nuggets of reality” (Bower, 1998, p.361). The researcher contributes these nuggets by following a strict regimen defined by introductory positivistic-oriented research methods courses and copied in the methods sections of quantitative-based research articles. The positivist questions asked are based on a “proven” cannon of quantitative research history – a history that claims ownership of both the name
“Scientific Method” and “science research” as a whole (Creswell, 2003, p.6). These questions include those of establishing internal and external validity, determining reliability of testing or survey instruments, adhering to standards of random selection and random assignment (Ary, 2002). Overwhelmingly, quantitative research questions must include results that are “value-free” (Lather, 1986, p.259). In other words, the results of positivistic-oriented research must be deemed “positive” and sound. They must contribute to our understanding of a world that is governed by general principles that we strive – through logical positivist research -- to identify. (Ary, 2002, p.22)

Formal definitions of what constitutes the quantitative abound, scribed by both self-described positivist oriented and postpositivist researchers. Creswell (2003) calls the quantitative method one of “closed-ended questions, predetermined approaches, and numeric data” (p.19). Ary (2002) defines the quantitative as research that studies “relationships, cause and effect” with fixed designs, a deductive approach, and statistical analysis in “well-controlled settings” (p.22). The American Psychological Association (APA) designates quantitative psychology as a subfield, classifying its work as that of “the study of methods and techniques for the measurement of human attributes, the statistical and mathematical modeling of psychological processes, the design of research studies, and the analysis of psychological data” (2009). The APA currently identifies no subfield or division as qualitative psychology.

Researchers with a more qualitative viewpoint formally define the quantitative somewhat differently. In “Evaluating Qualitative Research” written by Blee (2004) for the National Science Foundation’s Workshop on Scientific Foundations of Qualitative
Research, the quantitative is defined as easily justifiable for scholars, with already “proven analytic and predictive strengths” – the implication being that the qualitative reigns as more complex in rigor but “unfocused” next to logical positivism’s accepted linear model (p.55). Glesne (2006) calls a quantitative approach “research…designed with the intention of making generalizations about some social phenomena, creating predictions about those phenomena, and providing causal explanations” whereas a qualitative approach is less about generalizations but “understanding” said phenomena from the “perspectives of those involved” (p.4).

Lather (1986) notes that the quantitative is described as the “correct method” in scientific study but one that does not necessarily “guarantee true results” (p.259). For Sipe and Constable (1996) logical positivism is defined as a method where reality is “found” and “objective” and “truth is one,” whereas qualitative modes of inquiry define “truth as many” (1996, p.155). Gelo, Braakman, and Benetka (2008) call the differences between the two camps as that of seeing reality as “single and tangible” versus “multiple and socially and psychologically constructed” (2008, p.270). Merriam (1998) summarizes the epistemological differences as:

Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world…in contrast to quantitative research, which takes apart a phenomenon to examine component parts (which become the variables of the study), qualitative research can reveal how all the parts work together to form a
whole. It is assumed that meaning is embedded in people’s experiences and that this meaning is mediated through the investigator’s own perceptions (p.6).

In defining the qualitative, the postpositivist researcher questions whether the *objective* science of positivism really accomplishes what it purports to do: establish a *truth* about the world. In qualitative eyes, *truth* is defined by circumstance, power structures, the researcher, and the researched – an “interpretation of the subjective human experience” (Denzin, 1989, p.24) – all working in tandem consciously or unconsciously to create narratives of time, people, and place. More polarized postpositivist researchers critique what they describe as the “rigidity” of quantitative work (Lincoln, 1995, p.276) and argue that it cannot be truly objective because objectivity is an historical construct. And like any other epistemological construct, it changes in definition across time.

Not surprisingly, researchers more committed to the logical positivist approach tend to focus on definitions of procedure, deduction, and numerical analysis. Others concentrate on the accepted, so-called predictive qualities of positivism, comparing it to the perspective-based strengths of the qualitative. Even when attempting formal definitions of the positivist or postpositivist, theorists become stymied by their own conceptions of what constitutes the building of knowledge, and these conceptions fall on a continuum of acceptance -- from those decidedly positivist to those rooted in the postpositivist, with many falling somewhere in between. The extremes of each ideology seem content to define themselves in relation to the other, and the harshest critics of each camp seem unable to see potential strengths in a unity of the two methods.
For research in the sciences—which also runs on a continuum from the hard sciences to the so-called “softer” sciences of education or psychology—a harsh division between research camps seems to do little to promote an accumulation of knowledge that can satisfy the complexity of human phenomena. Currently, more theorists are exploring this division to explain why it persists, and how science research can evolve past it. In the field of education, researchers struggle with these questions while also working to satisfy the immediate needs of practice in the schools and adherence to federal and state mandates—goals that are not often in tandem. For the education subfield of school psychology, these question are further complicated by school psychology’s strong ties to the social science of psychology, a field that also continues to define itself in relation to harder, quantitative sciences, particularly that of medicine. School psychology’s links to both education and psychology make its place on the research continuum unique. Its response to this methodology debate will affect how children are evaluated, how they may be served in the schools, and how our culture sees mental health and disability services in the schools as a whole.

**History**

It is impossible to evaluate how school psychology has adopted and utilized research methodologies without first considering how our current understanding of research in the sciences came to be, and how our immediate understanding of both education and psychology—school psychology being the child of both—came into being. First, there is the argument that research, like politics or popular culture, follows a
pathway defined by trend, time, and place, and what gains acceptance in the scientific community as a whole is dependent on these same things.

Bower (1998) argues that our modern day conception of what constitutes appropriate scientific methods is colored by a century of “science wars” over the boundaries of epistemology. Bower cites philosophers and historians who separate this science debate into discourse on the history of objectivity rather than what really classifies knowledge and points out their frustrations with scientists, researchers, and theorists who define objectivity as “something locked into place” rather than something that has had and continues to have different definitions over time (p.360).

Objectivity, in the empirical, logically positivist sense of the term, was a 19th century construct. Bower notes that the rise of the objective in 20th century science began in the 19th century as philosophers of science began to distinguish themselves from the rise of Romanticism in art and culture, hoping to contribute facts about the world that were not subject to change, not reflections of reality, but reality itself. Further, science as a philosophy became influenced, much like everything else, by the rise of the machine. Gone were ink drawings of natural phenomena and human anatomy; the camera became the only objective instrument for recording facts about the world. The machine became a metaphor for the quantitative because it offered science a seemingly inarguable way of knowing the world. Being inhuman, it could be completely objective. Now separating themselves from the sway of subjective romanticism with technology, the advocates of empirical logical positivism had an ally in modern industry.
According to paradigm research by Glesne (2006), the concept of science research as a potentially changeable culture of its own became part of the lexicon of the research community with Thomas Kuhn’s 1962 publication, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Kuhn suggested the logical positivism of science research might be influenced by ideology -- a “battleground where ideas and explanations competed, and those that ‘won’ were often those of the scientists with the most power” (Glesne, p.7). Kuhn’s work introduced the concept of malleability in epistemological paradigm to discussions in the scientific community; ways of knowing the world could shift with power structures.

There is a loose consensus in the postpositivist research community that qualitative research grew from the ethnographic work that began in anthropology in the early 20th century. Prior to that, as England grew in geographical power in the late 19th century, research had been heavily defined by colonial interest and dismissed as lacking depth and quality (Glesne, 2006; Lagemann, 2000). In this early milieu, anthropology may have served the interests of the power structure, but also emerged as a separate, distinct science. Its practitioners adopted a “way of knowing” the world that included what we now see as classical ethnography -- “using culture as the theoretical framework for studying and describing a group,” rather than colonial interest and/or socioeconomic or political need (Glesne, 2006, p.9).

Lagemann (2000) writes of the field of education’s evolution as a science of emerging recognition, a science of the quantitative, and a science that eventually tenuously accepts the potential for qualitative modes of research. The very early 20th
century was marked by education’s struggle to gain acceptance as a field at the university level -- it was colored by its 19th century beginnings in rural communities, the rise of the normal school, and its significant reliance on the female teacher at a time when gender heavily influenced success in scholarship. Lagemann notes that by the end of World War I, education departments had successfully infiltrated the university, and an “unprecedented growth in educational study” had begun (p.20). Despite this greater acceptance, education departments continued to be viewed as academically inferior to other university departments. This lack of status inspired an almost complete commitment to quantification in research and helped education researchers feel “just as scientific as their university peers” (p.21). If one’s field was to be part of identifying the reality of phenomena using consistent, stable, and supposedly inarguable procedures, then it must be legitimate and must become accepted by the university community. Education’s early overreliance on quantification helped to heal a “troubled scientific community” at a time when it most sought legitimacy and separation from psychology (Bower, 1998, p.362). Ironically, education continues to struggle with an inferiority complex that keeps it from adopting modes of research that would ultimately give it more strength in practice.

Like education, psychology is a young science, with the first formal and autonomous department in psychology formed beside the older sciences of physics, chemistry and biology at Clark University in 1889 (Lagemann, 2000). Psychology emerged from the field of philosophy in which questions of the nature of man and mankind had been subjectively entertained for centuries, but with limited control by
quantifiable measures. From its inception, psychology sought to remedy this lack of
quantification, leading to its separation from philosophy and creation as a separate field:
“it charged itself with studying the same types of problems as philosophers, but by
applying the new scientific method,” which was defined by logical positivism (Todd &

Psychology depended on the scientific method for decades, despite individual
practitioner forays into more qualitative practices such as client interviews, observations,
and case-focused historical inquiry. But just as political and social modes of thinking
began to shift in America in the early 1960s, science as a whole began to slowly
transform: logical positivism was challenged by postpositivist ways of knowing. As a
science, psychology was not immune to this slow shift in paradigm. The recent “Petition
for an APA Division on Qualitative Inquiry” (2006) speaks of the transformation in
psychological research as one of accepting science as a “socially constituted activity” that
has served to engage unrecognized qualitative methods for some time. The petition asks
the American Psychological Association to formally recognize the “rich expansion in
practice” that already colors the scientific community as a whole (p.1) In 2000, the
National Institute of Mental Health Editors Consortium issued a statement urging journal
contributors to utilize “a greater investment in the development and use of diverse and
multiple methods.” Peer-reviewed journals such as Child Development and Journal of
Abnormal Child Psychology that had once relied solely on quantitative research were
opening to “methods, which might clarify the ecological context of behavioral and social
phenomena” (2000, p.66). Psychology began to open to qualitative and mixed method approaches.

Understanding the history of research in both education and psychology helps us to see how school psychology, born of both, also has heavily relied on quantitative methods both in research and practice. School psychology separated itself as a discipline relatively early, with practitioners appearing in the public schools in the 1920s (Fagan & Wise, 2000). Formal designation as a branch of psychology came in 1945 as the APA defined school psychologists as Division 16, and eventually school psychology in the 1960s. Yet clinical psychology continued to dominate APA and most psychological research practice. In response, school psychology eventually formed its own national organization in 1969 – the National Association of School Psychologists – that reflected its dual role in education and psychology, as well as its focus on the child and school ecology. Initially, however, school psychology research was defined in relation to educational psychology – another highly quantified field that came to be heavily influenced by behaviorism and behaviorist research (Lather, 1992).

School psychologists tended to be trained in either education or psychology departments and their scholarship reflected the standards of each – logical positivist in nature and subject to the standards of the scientific method. Trends in psychological practice also influenced acceptable research practice. The rise of behaviorism and behaviorist research models advocated “control” and “prediction” (Lather, 1992, p.90). Further, as a field that largely produces master’s level practitioners for the public schools, school psychology is subject to public and political opinion that tends to value the
quantitative *proof* of numbers over the apparent subjectivity of more qualitative paradigms. As legislation evolves to define school accountability by test results, school psychology research – eager to embrace grant monies and recognition on a national scale – mirrors the change. Though school psychologists continue to work toward an ecological approach to placement classifications for children, there continues to be an overreliance on testing, with the cognitive ability test serving as the greatest determinant. Although NASP may be ready to accept qualitative methods as having a complementary role in evidence-based practice (Meyers & Sylvester, 2006) federal legislation and research history keeps school psychology from embracing either mixed-methods or fully qualitative paradigms with any true enthusiasm.

**Argument**

Though subareas in education have begun to embrace modes of qualitative research, particularly action research and interpretivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, Glesne, 2006, Bogdan & Bilken, 1992), school psychology continues to see qualitative work as distinctly complementary to the scientific method even as school psychologists daily employ mixed methods approaches to assessing children for education placement, consultation, and intervention. Mixed methods research is formally defined as a research design that “combines and integrates qualitative and quantitative research approaches” and reflects the philosophies and theoretical foundations of each albeit in less formalized, less scripted ways (Gelo et al., 2008). Mixed methods researchers have more flexibility in the designs of their work, nodding to the fluidity inherent in postpositivism, but still incorporate quantitative procedures. Creswell (2003) writes that the mixed methods
approach “employs the data collection associated with both” and highlights studies in which the qualitative modes of interview and observation are combined with the quantitative methods of survey, addressing both “open and close-ended questions” (p.17).

School psychologists already employ a mixed methods approach in regards to determining placement and intervention needs for children, and are, in fact, encouraged to do so by researchers and theorists who promote a shift in school psychology paradigm for the 21st century. The current NASP position paper on school psychologists’ involvement in the role assessment (2003) defines assessment – which many would argue constitutes school psychology’s job security in the public schools --as a process that involves “gathering information from a variety of sources” and contrasts this with the highly quantitative “administration and scoring of tests.” NASP “endorses assessment practices that are tailored to the individual student in the context of a comprehensive delivery system that facilitates educational progress for all children” (emphasis added), a statement that is suggestive of postpositivist and mixed approaches in evaluation procedures.

NASP goes on to promote the use of assessment practices that are “multidimensional” and “inclusive of an examination of family and educational systems, and home environments” and “not limited to a single methodology or framework” – language that suggests an endorsement of the qualitative use of context, ecology, and subjectivity. NASP’s position here is accepting of a mixed methods approach to assessment practice, and in consideration of the typical school psychological assessment procedure – observation, interview, testing, etc., -- it is entirely appropriate. At its root,
school psychology assessment -- like clinical psychological assessment -- is a mixed method process.

To some critics of current school psychology practice, this is not enough. Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) write of the extensive challenges practicing school psychologists face due to recent legislation as well as the continually increasing problems of children and youth due to poverty, disintegrating families and communities, health care issues, and social and cultural conditions. Sheridan and Gutkin note that school psychologists struggle to affect public policy and change but are often stymied by legislation that does not consider the realities of the public school system, or the ecologies in which they survive: “oftentimes, macro-level legislative and policy mandates partly or wholly determine services that school psychologists are able to provide to students…school psychologists may be limited to the roles of testing and placement” (p.487).

Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) suggest that school psychology as a field should become more committed to addressing and directing policy in education with the express directive of moving toward a paradigm that embraces the ecology of the child and school as a system (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) and is alert to the “multiple systems surrounding us” (p.489). This language continues to be the language of context and construction of the individual, the school, and the system, and smacks of qualitative methodological approaches and reasoning: it is not one method alone that establishes the “truth” of an individual but “ongoing interactions between the characteristics of individuals and the multiple environments within which they function” (p.489).
Even school psychology theorists who herald the quantitative accountability mandated by the 2002 passage of No Child Left Behind in one breath go on to endorse a paradigm shift to a “multiple systems” perspective in another, again suggestive of a mixed methods approach in methodology (Shapiro, 2006, p.260). In “Are We Solving the Big Problem?” published as commentary in School Psychology Review, Shapiro acknowledges No Child Left Behind for its “recognition that there really is a research base upon which educators can draw to bring evidence-based interventions into the schools” (p.260), but then echoes the work of Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) by arguing that the field of psychology must look ahead to dramatic changes in practice and training that adopt “systematic ways of thinking” that embrace the “salient point…that context does matter.” This phrase draws to mind qualitative researcher Patti Lather’s comment that we “do not find data under a tree, we construct it” based on that context that surrounds it and us (Sipe & Ghiso 2004).

Shapiro (2006) illustrates his point by writing of the problems researchers have faced when trying to incorporate quantitative, evidence-based practices in schools when they have little understanding of staff reaction, need, and implementation – areas where qualitative and mixed methods approaches could be invaluable. He notes that these researchers did not ask the question, “were there personnel who objected to the use of various types of general outcome measures…despite the well-established support in the literature?” (p.261). This is a research question of subjectivity and context and one that a more qualitative approach could help to answer, allowing potential reading interventions to succeed rather than languish due to staff issues. Shapiro goes on to discuss a case in
which 80% of a school staff rejected an empirically supported model of school-wide behavior support and thus would not implement it. Here again, context matters, and a qualitative approach to understanding and designing the research might have uncovered these issues prior to the failure of the intervention. Despite his love of No Child Left Behind’s emphasis on evidence-based studies, Shapiro hints at an endorsement of a mixed methods approach, stating, “it is clear that a predetermined set of elements within the context are needed for successful outcomes” (p.261).

Despite these shifts in paradigm approaches in school psychology practice and theory, school psychology research remains reluctant to embrace qualitative or even mixed methods approaches even as the accountability measures advocated by law and promoted through positivistic methods have not widely increased academic success in schools (Murrell, 2000). Powell, Mihalas, Onwuegbuzie, Suldo, and Daley (2008) write that even as research in the sciences moves into a “synthesis period,” uniting the ideological camps of the qualitative and quantitative and engaging mixed methods approaches, leading school psychology journals continue to show a dearth of such research, with only “13.7% of studies” showing mixed methods and few accepting qualitative work at all (2008, p.291). Powell et al. go on to illustrate that not only is mixed methods work rejected, but research about such work in school psychology is nonexistent. Further, Powell and colleagues suggest it may be fear that motivates this rejection of mixed methods. A review of school psychology journal articles shows that researchers are using mixed methods but are refusing to acknowledge that they are doing so. The authors conclude by suggesting, again, that school psychology practice is
inherently mixed methods in approach. If school psychology research could move to accept a mixed methods approach, data would be “richer” and would lead to a “greater understanding of underlying phenomena” (p. 291).

**Research Design**

The proposed study is predicated on the theoretical approach of socially constructed knowledge, where individuals are driven to construct meaning about the world that is necessarily complex and in constant flux (Cresswell, 2003). The researcher will explore subjects’ reactions to their situational context as much as possible, aiming to explore their understandings of this urban educational world in which they professionally train. The process of data collection and data analysis will be thus centrally informed by construction, with the researcher “gathering information personally” and remaining strongly cognizant of her own situational perspective (Cresswell, 2003, p.9). With this theoretical approach, data analysis must be inherently shaped by both researcher and subject, with the researcher attempting to create meaning from data gathered for, about, and with, the researched.

The case study – “employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved” (Merriam, 1998, p.19) is commensurate with this approach and appropriate for research in the field of education, where its practice is prevalent. Case study research is not defined solely as either quantitative or qualitative in nature, but tends to be governed primarily by qualitative research principles that adhere to a bounded system of application (Smith, 1978). In other words, case study research is “bounded” by the case or cases themselves. Merriam (1998) allows that the case study becomes “a
thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (p.27). The case, or series of cases, becomes an entity that is richly explored within the confines of its boundary or boundaries; it has a center (the case) and then an external barrier that defines it as a separate phenomenon or entity from all other things. Yin (2009) argues that the case study approach is best used by the researcher who seeks to explore a current phenomenon with extensive depth or richness of information – a depth that cannot be served by the majority of quantitative modes of study, where individuals or phenomenon are often “deliberately” divorced from situational context (p.18). The case study approach allows the researcher to investigate contemporary phenomena from multiple perspectives and utilizing multiple sources of data, while honoring context.

The researcher will use a multiple case study design comprised of three case studies within the same boundary or framework of the Ohio State University school psychology master’s level internship program. Yin (2009) insists that single-case studies and multiple case studies are not distinct methodologies but are within the same design scheme; he notes that multiple case studies are often employed analytically as “comparative” in nature, and that the researcher must take pains to select cases that are similar in nature or in framework so as to not invite conflicting results through participant selection alone. Further, Yin acknowledges that while multiple case studies are often more laborious for researchers, they also tend to provide more substantive data than single-case designs.

As case study research claims no specific methodology for design or analysis, the researcher is informed through this process by the general thrust or intent of the study
(Merriam, 1998). Here, the focus of the collection and analysis is largely descriptive in nature, with an emphasis on a “detailed account of the phenomenon under study” (Merriam, 1998, p.38). Chosen data collection and analysis procedures are not intended to be evaluative in nature – this is not a critique of one urban school psychology master’s preparation program. The data gathered is intended to contribute to a general model of school psychology training that can be applied in all internship placements – what training methods and approaches to field training placement might best promote hopeful thinking in students? By necessity with the boundaries of the case study, some voices will not be heard from – specifically, those of involved university and district personnel. While the supplied case studies provide rich narratives of this internship experience, they must be analyzed within the context of the specific year of data collection (2009-2010) and with the clear understanding of the missing university and district perspective.

**Participant Selection**

Patton (1990) indicates that one of the great divisions between the qualitative and quantitative arrives with sampling procedures; the majority of qualitative study intends for samples to be smaller in scope and chosen *purposefully* for its potential for rich information – cases from which “we can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p.169). In contrast, the quantitative research depends on the largest of samples possible, selected randomly. The qualitative is not random, and the proposed study is no exception. Here, participants were selected both for the potential for their ability to generate rich data on hopefulness in school psychology intern students, but also because they are the “critical cases” currently placed in urban
field assignments by the Ohio State University School Psychology Program (Patton, 1990, p. 174).

As such, the proposed study also serves as a population study by quantitative measures: the three students to be profiled are the only three students at the master level placed in urban fieldwork settings for their cumulative internship year of study. All three are female and within the same age range, and all three have been placed in the same urban school district. In contrast, other master students have been placed in suburban and rural districts for their internship year of study. Thus, the data collected will encompass the data that is possible for the Ohio State University’s school psychology master’s level student on internship in urban field placements.

IRB approval was gained during the summer of 2009. As study participants are over the age of 18 and considered adults, informational letters and consent forms were directly given to study subjects (Appendix A). After obtaining signatures, the researcher contacted each participant with the initial study questionnaire and to schedule the first round of interviews.

Setting

The proposed research will occur primarily in The Ohio State University’s master’s program in school psychology located in the urban area of Columbus, Ohio. The Ohio State University’s School psychology program is based on the scientist-practitioner model of training and is rooted in socio-cultural theories of psychological and educational practices with children and adolescents. It is further described as training practitioners in multiple settings with an emphasis on “children in urban settings” and a commitment to
“diversity at the research, training and services level” (www.osu.edu). During the 2009-2010 school year, eight master’s level students were placed in internship field experiences in central Ohio school districts; of these eight, three were placed in urban settings within the same urban district. This urban school district is the state of Ohio’s largest district, and is located within the central city of Columbus, Ohio. Over 53,000 students attend this district’s 127 schools; the student composition is 56% African-American. Proposed study subjects were placed in seven of these schools based on their supervisor’s individual schedules.

**Data Collection**

The majority of qualitative researchers support a process of data collection that employs multiple techniques and practices as much for the quality and richness of the data description, but also in order to address potential issues of validity (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Glesne, 200; Yin, 2009). Here, the researcher uses a concurrent triangulation strategy to data collection, where qualitative data is prioritized and collected simultaneously with quantitative (Creswell, 2003). Creswell notes that this triangulation approach is normally utilized in order to compensate for inherent weaknesses in either a full positivist or postpositivist method, but its use here is different. The use of a quantitative data collection procedure here does not suggest that on their own, qualitative techniques would not yield appropriate, rich results; its use is intended to mirror aspects of the mixed methods approach of school psychology assessment, which, at its root, creates case studies of individuals using this same, concurrent triangulation approach. Thus, this design is organic to the field it is intended to study. As in psychological case
study, both approaches will ideally “confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings” as the study progresses (p.217). The proposed study will incorporate the following types of data collection:

1. Concurrent, semi-structured interviews: Interviews will be conducted once with the three case study participants during each quarter (3) of their urban internship experience. Interview questions are conversational in nature and intended to build the richness and thickness of the exploratory data. Questions will be semi-structured by the theoretical underpinnings of Hope Theory, but will also allow for the participants’ full “illumination of the phenomenon of study” (Glesne, 2006, p.82). All subject interviews will be audiotaped and will normally last sixty to ninety minutes during each quarter of study. Interviews will be scheduled and conducted according to the schedules of the participants, and will take place in agreed upon, quiet locations where conversation can be natural (homes, coffee shops, etc.). All interviews will be transcribed by the researcher according to qualitative data collection and analysis procedures (Glesne, 2006).

2. Pre-study questionnaire: In order to help build the initial interview questions and address the history of each case study participant, each participant completed a brief, structured questionnaire prior to her initial interview. The questionnaire (Appendix B) consisted of questions related to the subjects’ areas of school placement, previous experience in urban environments, prior educational experiences, and choices regarding graduate programs in school psychology. Questionnaire results were analyzed for general and personal themes that were then incorporated into the initial interviews.
3. Unstructured, participant-observations: Contextual, participant-observations were conducted of all case study subjects during monthly internship placement meetings (nine total) conducted by the Ohio State University and held on the Ohio State University campus. These observations are considered “participant” in nature as the researcher, also on internship, serves as part of the social, contextual setting and has developed a relationship in this setting with the participants (Glesne, 2006). Participants will be observed for their comfort with the university’s approach to internship goals and requirements, as well as for their responses to the university’s support during the urban field placement process.

4. Document analysis: Harber (1997) advocates for the use of document analysis in the qualitative study, calling it a central part of exploring the “realistic insights into various contexts, issues and organizations” that may influence both participant and researcher (p. 114). Here, document analysis will be used to interpret the central themes of the field internship goal sheet (Appendix E) that is given to each site supervisor in order to evaluate its clarity and central message, and determine its contributions to subjects’ levels of hope. Steps of document analysis include a description of content, an identification of major themes, and reflective notes on these themes. General themes are then coded and compared to the coded themes generated in the personal interviews (see data analysis).

5. Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (Appendix C): Snyder (1991) has developed a series of hope scales that are intended to measure subjects’ levels of hope in various settings and at different times of life. In Snyder’s (2000) words, hope scales are:
Diagnostic instruments that can be used to determine clients’ perceived (1) motivations for pursuing goals (agency thought) and (2) abilities to identify workable routes to goal attainment (pathway thought). Hope indices also can be used to…increase one’s understanding of the client and…measure outcomes…it is a measure of clients’ assets. (p.58).

Though Snyder notes that all of his hope scales can be used in many settings and for many purposes, his Adult Dispositional Hope Scale is most appropriate as the quantitative “slice” of the proposed study due to its higher reliabilities (.74 to .84 for six samples of undergraduate college students) and high correlation to other measures of positive psychologies such as measures of optimism (Life Orientation Test; Schieier & Carver, 1985) and self-esteem (Self-Esteem Scale; Rosenberg, 1965) (Lopez, Ciarelli, Coffman, Stone & Wyatt, 2000). Further, the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale would be most appropriate in measuring the hope of individuals completing a year-long internship experience in the two linked domains of academia and professional work as the experience is not in the present or “here and now” but a culminating experience which incorporates more than a single life domain (Snyder, 2000). This scale is a self-report, 12-item inventory intended to measure individual hope levels in adults ages 15 and older. It requires only a limited amount of time to complete – three to six minutes – and can be completed with a pencil or pen. The Hope scale is normally hand scored with a 4-to-8 point response continuum. Four response items reflect agency, four reflect pathways, and four serve as distractors. Agency and pathways questions are added to provide the total hope score (Snyder, 1991).
The Adult Dispositional Hope Scale will be administered to all three of the case study subjects during their final round of interviews during the Ohio State University’s spring quarter. This administration time was chosen because it is the culmination of their urban field placement experience, and the hope scale is intended to reflect their culminating sense of hope as they begin the process of choosing a professional job placement for the following school year. In essence, the hope scale is projected to enhance subjects’ interviews and observations as yet another part of the “richness” of their experience.

6. Exit survey: Subjects’ exit surveys are intended to serve as member checks, or opportunities for subjects to review their case study transcripts prior to final report, and answer questions concerning the data to establish their personal understanding of the researcher’s narratives of individual data (Yin, 2009). Exit survey will be developed from the data supplied through these multiple streams of inquiry and are intended to clarify the narrative themes.

Data Analysis

Merriam (1998) describes the data analysis process of the case study design as similar to other qualitative methodologies, but also strongly dependent on a commitment to full description of the case study or studies under examination. She writes that the eventual case study report will be organically “descriptive…in order to convey a holistic understanding of the case(s)” but may also honor the development of themes or categories that can eventually lead to new theory or models of research as normally
characterizes qualitative data interpretation approaches (p.194). Yin (2009) suggests that researchers with multiple cases consider a cross-case comparison process, where themes found in each solo case are then matched, with an emphasis on pattern building and the development of eventual themes and/or theory drawn from hypotheses concerning said emerging patterns.

While the use of a more systemized coding process is not considered essential for case study data analysis, it will be utilized for the proposed study due to the quantity of the data streams and the management thereof, and also toward the pursuit of theory. Traditional grounded theory methods of coding analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) are designed to ground theory in the collected data and necessarily include the search for initial themes (open coding), the linking of theme to theme, or development of categories or patterns (axial coding), and the building of those categories so that developed theory is finite within the existing data (selective coding).

Here, this process is completed within each solo case and then across cases, with the essential addition of hypothesizing about said categories and themes towards the development of theory. For example, if a solo case theme is one of “effective supervisor modeling of hope” it would then be patterned across cases with the hypothesis of “hopeful supervisor” as a tenet of urban training for young school psychologists. This tenet would be added to the building of a model for the effective training of young school psychologists for urban placements; it would contribute to our understanding of what makes young school psychologists thrive in urban work placements, and possibly
contribute to the development of the positive school. As other patterns emerge from initial open coding to axial coding to selective coding and so on, they too would be hypothesized as part of the emerging theory. Thus, solo cases are respected and explored within individual contexts, but cross case analyses build the eventual theoretical model.

This mode of data analysis requires a more structured approach to data management. In this study, interviews are transcribed and observations formalized within the time frame of collection (within the quarter of time they are collected), and other data streams (document analysis, Hope Scale administration) are also collected concurrently and stored on a single computer. Coding control will be maintained using a code book where participants are assigned specific codes (OO, EE, XX) and then themes and categories are also coded and connected with participant codes. Glesne (2006) describes a code book model that encompasses appropriate data management for the proposed study; each subject is assigned a portion of the code book and codes themselves are listed at the beginning of the book and allowed to “grow” or “emerge” as new themes or categories become apparent, and until data “saturation” is complete and new theory begins to develop (p.151). An example of this initial code book appears below:
Trust

If we accept the assumption that school psychology research is separated into two camps – the quantitative and qualitative – and that of these two camps, the quantitative is preferable, then we must conclude that the establishment of trust or validity in school psychology research will be determined by quantitative rules. We must then establish that quantitative research is solely quantitative in scope and contains no qualitative elements that might affect its trustworthiness, and also that its practice in educational studies has both internal and external validity – the hallmarks of its trust.

Is quantitative research only quantitative? Does it contain no elements of subjectivity in its explanations of natural phenomena? Ericikan and Roth (2006) argue there is no point in separating research into diametrically opposed, ideological camps because the research streams cannot be truly separate. Quantitative contains the
qualitative and vice versa. They further suggest that by dividing research into these strongly identified perspectives, education scholarship does itself a great disservice and loses opportunities to collect varied and rich data. Ericikan and Roth point out that while quantitative researchers may rely on inarguable statistics to suggest that a reading program is not working, it is up to the qualitative researcher to “discover why” (2006, p.15).

It is a fallacy to suggest that most quantitative research goes forward with no subjective decisions, observations, or determinations. Internal and external validity rules attempt to control some of these, but they continue to exist in most quantitative studies in one form or another. Richard Lomax’s tome on the use of statistics in quantitative research, An Introduction to Statistical Concepts (2007), reveals a case used for teaching one-factor analysis of variance where one of the variables is the “attractiveness” of the instructor and the other is the number of times a student attends lab (p.208). One of these variables can be deemed objective and assigned a number, while the other seems completely subjective and unquantifiable. Yet, despite the fact that attractiveness is an indeterminate term dependent – literally – on the eye of the beholder, it is utilized as an appropriate independent variable in a statistics textbook for quantitative study procedures – the case is used over and over again throughout the text. Although many “quantitative variables …encode information ambiguously” (Gelo et al., 2008, p.267) quantitative researchers seem unable to accept that their research may be rife with these inconsistencies.
Given that traditional criteria for evaluating validity and reliability are so steeped in the values of positivistic methodology, it has been difficult for qualitative researchers to establish similar research boundaries for their work without resorting to quantitative frameworks. This challenge has been further complicated by the multiple ways qualitative research can be combined and practiced – action research, interpretivism, grounded theory, and case study, to name just a few – leading theorists to wonder if individual methods or combinations thereof require different understanding of validity. Qualitative deconstructionists argue that qualitative researchers need not address questions of trustworthiness at all, as it is an essentially quantitative construct. Scheurich (1996) argues that postpositivists are willing to claim that traditional social scientific methodology “is dead” but cling to validity just as they “dump conventional science, the nomological net from which validity derived its meaning” (1996, p.2). Scheurich rightly notes that conceptions of validity are actually “discourses of and about power” (p.4) and those who are in positions of power in the grant-bestowing arena and academic circles generally set the boundaries of validity regardless of whether they are quantitative or qualitative. In other words, if postpositivists defy the classifications, the lust for absolutes, and the scientific methodologies of logical positivism, why are they so enamored with its definition of what constitutes acceptable or recognizable practice? If postpositivists reject the rigidity of logical positivism, and validity is the cornerstone of its methods, why do they not defy it as well? Is it a push for legitimacy – a necessity for grant funding and climbing the rungs of tenure – that makes the qualitative researcher mirror the positivist in the pursuit of trust?
Despite these arguments, the majority of qualitative researchers in education tend to embrace some conception of validity in their work and encourage trustworthiness in qualitative research as a whole. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) stress that qualitative work – specifically ethnographic work – remain true to the “phenomena being studied” with methods that remain “sensitive to the nature of human and cultural social contexts” (p.290), the argument being that this type of qualitative work is inherently trustworthy due to its very nature: the researcher commits to “truth” from the onset simply by engaging in a strong system of ethnographic ethics and process. Blee (2004) reiterates that the often eclectic modes of methods process in qualitative research leads to separate standards of trust and quality, which becomes challenging for the reviewer or critic. She notes, ironically, that when some qualitative researchers pursue validity under more quantitative terms – say by a carefully designated sampling frame or more structured interviewing – they can be criticized for their lack of freedom and commitment to a logical positivist boundary. In conclusion, she writes that qualitative research must be “evaluated on its own merits” not as a “weaker version of quantitative research” (p.55). It must have a strong design for data collection and analysis, must incorporate strong qualitative approaches (site commitment, rich description of data, storytelling), and should be “expansive” in scope, building our knowledge base about the topic or phenomena (p.57).

Validity and Reliability

Like many in qualitative research, Yin (2009) suggests that postpositivism requires some nod to the positivist constructions of both validity and reliability. Yin
designates case study research with both components of the qualitative and quantitative as possibly the strongest approach to addressing issues of validity and reliability, calling such a design a “strong analytic strategy” that “can yield appreciable results” (p. 132). Though less inclined to support a formal approach to issues of trust until the data analysis phase of research, Glesne (2006) also suggests that qualitative researchers address trustworthiness in their research proposals; Merriam (1998) is sensitive to deconstructionist yearnings for “totally different conceptualizations of validity and reliability” for the qualitative, but yields to research frameworks that introduce “strategies” for addressing both (p.201).

**Validity.**

Following Yin’s design and method for case study research, the proposed study will address four areas of trust:

1. **Construct Validity:** Construct validity will be established in the proposed study by using multiple sources of evidence. Yin (2009) recommends that researchers address issues of construct validity by developing the richness of qualitative or mixed methods case methodology through multiple sources of data or evidence. Creswell (1998) concurs that triangulation – the use of “multiple data collection methods, multiple sources” (p.201) can create such verification. Here, construct validity shall be established through:
   (a) concurrent, semi-structured interviews; (b) pre-study questionnaire; (c) unstructured, participant- observations; (d) document analysis (e) Adult Dispositional Hope Scale; (f) exit survey.
2. External Validity: external validity – the extent to which the findings of one study can be generalized to other situations – remains an issue in education research for the quantitative researcher because it is challenging to find school and classroom situations that can provide the purely random samples necessary for a true experimental design. Most of the quantitative research done in the school environment is quasi-experimental in scope and often depends on volunteers, and therefore results “cannot be generalized beyond the range of data used in the analyses” (Erickikan & Roth, 2006, p.15). Yet many quantitative theorists argue that external validity is actually greater for studies conducted in real world field settings such as the public schools precisely because true experimental research occurs in such controlled settings (Gleim, 2009, p.17). Regardless, these arguments begin to allow for the potential of flexibility in our conceptions of reality and phenomena, which may be different in multiple settings or context regardless of experimental control. These are hints that phenomena may not be as tightly tied to static, identifiable scientific rules as logical positivism implies.

The proposed study will address external validity through multiple, population case studies. Case studies – by definition – are not intended to be generalizable; within the context of the supplied narratives, it must be understood that these participants may not be typical of the Ohio State Master’s program in School Psychology. Yin (2006) correctly notes that case studies are not pursued to produce sample data that is to be generalize to a “larger universe” (p.43) such as in quantitative-based survey research. Yet, multiple case studies that incorporate a full population – such as all the urban-placed, Ohio State school psychology masters level students on internship – may yield
stronger methodology than single case study to help develop a *theory* of how a particular phenomenon may be generalized to similar situational contexts. Yin cautions, however, that this building of theory or model must be tested across contexts where similar results may occur. This suggests that such study design helps create theory to build further study, and eventual, accepted theory.

**Reliability.**

At its root, reliability attempts to correct for error and bias by determining that a study can be replicated. Merriam (1998) notes that quantitative research has a tenuous relationship with reliability because it fails to recognize that “human behavior is never static” and the interpretations of such, at any given time, change within the course of human and inhuman events (p.205). This is yet another instance of quantitative methodology being misapplied to postpositivist approaches: by definition, the richness of the majority of qualitative research lies within its exploratory approach and is dependent on the individual researcher and his/her relationship with the phenomenon under study. Merriam is insistent that the same study, replicated by another researcher, may yield different interpretations and *this only adds to the quality of the original data*. In other words, strong qualitative research looks toward replication as yet another layer of exploration, and one that does not negate prior studies. Merriam encourages qualitative researchers to address reliability as more of a consistency within related studies – are similar themes apparent and emerging? -- as well as a consistency with the collected data. Yin (2009) suggests that the case study researcher adhere to standards of reliability by making as many steps of one’s study as “operational” as possible and to “conduct
research as if someone was always looking over your shoulder” (p.45). For multiple case study designs, he suggests the use of a case study protocol in order to list study operations for future research. The proposed study will address issues of reliability by including such documentation with the understanding that it is merely a guide for similar research and not intended to exactly replicate study procedure or serve as a template for interpretation.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical guidelines for researcher conduct are not limited to the quantitative; qualitative researchers highly value appropriate researcher-researched relationships, and in fact, have stronger guidelines for the depth and scope of these relationships precisely because postpositivist methodologies often employ greater interaction and involvement between researcher and subject. Glesne (2006) notes that “ethical considerations are inseparable from your everyday interactions with research participants and with your data,” and encourages a respect for the narratives of research participants and a willingness by the researcher to tell their stories with truth (p.129). In part, the proposed study addresses ethical issues of power and subjectivity by immersing the researcher into the study through epoche; with this, researcher bias can be explored and becomes a part of the data corpus. Study participants are also given “power” over their narratives through the implementation of the end-of-study questionnaire/survey, where they are finally able to comment on the “truthfulness” of the study conclusions. Other ethical considerations include but are not limited to:
1. Informed consent: through the informed consent form provided each subject (Appendix A), all subjects were made aware of the full nature of the study, that their participation in the proposed study is/was voluntary, and that they may discontinue participation in the study at any time. All subjects acknowledged that they understood the scope of the study and were willing to participate.

2. Privacy: to some extent in case study research, breaches of privacy are inevitable due to the nature of the medium, described as close, descriptive narratives of specific subjects (Glesne, 2006). Here, the researcher will attempt to protect the privacy of subjects by using fictitious names and identifying symbols or initials.

3. Reciprocity: Glesne (2006) cautions the qualitative researcher that true reciprocity through qualitative research is “impossible to determine” (p.143). How does the researcher optimally “reward” the subject(s) for the loss of time, their stories, and their commitment to the research at hand? Ideally, the reflective interview process and the “true” relating of subject narrative – literally retelling their stories – may be the only real reciprocity a researcher can offer. Here, the researcher hopes that supportive interviewing techniques and occasions for reflective feedback – through epoche and summary questionnaires – can aid her through this process.

4. Other guidelines: given the anthropological nature of socially constructed knowledge theory, the proposed study will follow the interview guidelines set forth by the Council of the American Anthropological Association (AAA); the guidelines set by the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the American Psychological Association.
(APA) have also been reviewed due to the close nature of researcher-researched relationships.
Chapter 4

Three Case Studies

This chapter presents case studies of three masters level school psychology students on internship in an urban school setting, each of whom will have her own reflective view of the training process, supervisory and university relationships, and experience of hope over the course of a 1500 clock-hour internship. Case study data was compiled from a series of nine concurrent, semi structured interviews conducted over each quarter of internship experience, monthly unstructured participant observation during university required internship meetings, an initial participant pre-study questionnaire, document analysis of the program’s internship goal sheet, and the results of the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale given during the last quarter of internship training.

In keeping with the qualitative framing of the overall study, the perspective of the researcher – a doctoral student also on internship but in a suburban setting – is included as a separate stream of data. The knowledge of the researcher will be emptied into each case study as epoche, designated by bracketing and italicized text (Creswell, 1998). These periods of epoche are designed to address issues of possible researcher bias, and intended as supplements to individual case studies; they are not intended to dominate
them. In all, the presented case studies include multiple streams of data as illustrated by the study design, but the data streams are essentially focused on the three study participants. By necessity within the boundaries of the case study model, some voices will not be heard from – specifically, those of involved university and district personnel. While the supplied case studies provide rich narratives of this internship experience, they must be analyzed within the context of the specific year of data collection (2009-2010) and with the clear understanding of the missing university and district perspective.

Case studies will be presented in narrative form, exploring each participant’s background, university training prior to urban internship, experience of internship, experience of hope, and final reflection on the full internship process. Contextual additions are intended to highlight how external factors and personality differences may also contribute to participant hope levels.

**Intensely Goal-driven: The Case of Amy**

**Background.**

Amy was the most professionally experienced study participant and also the oldest. Already twenty-seven when she entered Ohio State’s school psychology masters program, she’d held successful positions in the arena of disabilities and special needs, working with the county board of developmental disabilities for several years prior to graduate school. Married, white, and hailing from a self-described “middle-class and suburban background” near Cleveland, Ohio, Amy applied to a school psychology program precisely because it was outside the traditional view of psychology; she found it appealing that school psychology was not a field that focuses exclusively on mental
health issues, but one that encompasses the study and treatment of developmental and educational disabilities in the school arena.

Amy reported that her interest in developmental disabilities was for the most part inspired by family circumstance: her brother, quite a few years younger, continues to struggle with learning problems in his last year of high school and also attends regular school-based and private speech-language therapy services. Amy describes her cousin, adopted as an infant with crack addiction, as “cognitively disabled” and a contributor to her interest in the special needs population. Yet, when asked if her mostly Catholic schooling drew her together with special needs children, Amy notes that she had little contact with them, adding that she had some experience with a unit of hearing impaired students but that her school tended to “completely segregate them from the rest of the school.” Amy reported that most of her experience with people with disabilities – outside of those within her own family – came after college, while working for the county. In her initial pre-study questionnaire, Amy wrote that she wondered if she herself might struggle with some learning issues:

In school, I did not seem to have any serious learning issues, but I am just extremely slow in most tasks. I would probably score very low in cognitive efficiency and processing speed tasks, so I feel for those students.

(Like Amy, I had little experience with people with disabilities prior to graduate school and also have a predominantly white, suburban and middle class background. The schools in my smaller, Ohio town also tended to segregate students with disabilities from the general population. In contrast, I have no familial experience with disability.)
Urban Experience.

Amy was attracted to Ohio State’s school psychology program for one major reason: location. Her husband’s job made it essential that she stay in the central Ohio region, and Ohio State was the only graduate school to which she applied. Though Ohio State’s program was touted as the only one with a predominantly urban concentration, Amy admitted that this was not necessarily appealing to her, and that she “had mixed feelings about the urban focus.” She explained that she had been heavily influenced by a friend who had gone through the program, thought it was wonderful, but who had also struggled with the extent of the urban study because it “made her feel bad about being white.” Growing up in a bedroom community to Cleveland, Amy had had little need to travel from her majority white, middle class world into that of the central city other than to go to sporting events or the occasional downtown event. She reported little contact with urban environments and described Cleveland as “very segregated” with significant cultural and geographical barriers between communities such as the one of her adolescence and those of lower socio-economic status. Though she was concerned that the urban focus might become “challenging” given her own limited experience with urban environments, Amy admitted that she also found its possibilities intriguing:

I absolutely had mixed feelings about the urban focus. I thought…hmmm….how would the urban affect me? Learning more about different cultures and white privilege kind of interested me. I was very excited to learn more about urban culture and to get experience in an urban school. I was also pretty nervous to reach outside my comfort zone to gain the experience.
Master’s students in Ohio State’s School Psychology Program take on diversity issues during their first quarter of study, meeting weekly in a required three credit hour class called “Cultural Diversity: Developing a Multicultural Awareness.” The class is not limited to school psychology students and is popular across the educational and social science disciplines. Described as a class “provid(ing) students with an opportunity to develop a multicultural awareness as they explore the impact of an increasingly diverse society in the United States,” coursework includes extensive reading, weekly seminar with lecture and discussion, and a series of written assignments intended to help students reflect on their own cultural heritage and their place in the cultural landscape. At some point in the quarter, students are asked to spend time in a cultural environment very different from their own and reflect upon the experience. In year two of study, master’s students continue their cultural training in a follow-up three hour course entitled “Urban Issues in Education,” where students focus on cultural issues in relation to the urban school environment, emphasizing the “dynamics of the urban school.” This course also includes readings, seminar and discussion, and weekly writing assignments; students are also asked to spend time in urban schools and reflect on the experience, with an emphasis on the communities in which the schools operate.

Despite her initial “mixed” feelings about the urban thrust of the program, Amy described her training in these courses as “just really beneficial,” noting that they provided her with background information about urban issues within the schools essential to her understanding of the environment. One of the assignments in the initial Cultural
Diversity class asks students to write a paper on their own cultural history – a time consuming and challenging process that Amy found essential to her process of understanding diversity issues:

There’s a lot of self-reflection…there was one paper we wrote about our own cultural heritage and our experiences with different cultures and it made me look deeper inside myself and the issues that maybe I have dealt with and how I interact with people from different cultures. And I really thought that was a good basis for what was going to come ahead.

Cultural biases in test academic and cognitive test scores came as a surprise to Amy, who had never considered that discrepancies in these areas could be culturally based. She reported that her newfound understanding of these discrepancies directly influenced her choice of testing instruments and her analysis of assessment results when working with different school populations. The process of visiting urban schools was also an essential piece of training for Amy, who described the process as “becoming part of those schools” and gradually increasing her comfort level:

The continual visits helped me. I began to feel comfortable in those schools…and now on internship I feel very comfortable and I feel like I fit right in even though I’m, like, this white girl. It’s become natural to me.

(I had a mixed reaction to the Cultural Diversity course. On the one hand, it forced me to confront many of my personal stereotypes about different races and socio-economic levels. Researching and writing my own cultural history was an eye-opening experience, which helped me to begin to understand how my family’s economic and geographical
history had contributed to its racism, a topic I continue to reflect on today. Yet, I also found my class contentious with students from a variety of academic disciplines seemingly arguing all at once. I often felt like the “bad white girl” in a class comprised mainly of minority students. For me, it was a rough introduction to graduate study in school psychology. Now I can see now how well it prepared me for working in the urban school environment, but it was challenging at the time. Looking back, I realize that was part of the point of the course, and essential to my understanding of the different experiences and milieus.)

In year two of coursework, students begin their practicum experience in the central city urban schools. In the past, Ohio State master’s students were each assigned a separate psychology supervisor with separate schools, but during Amy’s year of practicum training, all students shared two supervisors and the same schools. While Amy felt her assessment training fairly strong over her practicum experience, she noted that sharing supervisors “was not the best” as students felt they lacked necessary one on one attention, with training and testing sessions seeming too crowded and rushed. She conceded that access to intervention education was lacking, and that she, with many other students, felt much of their time was spent in supervisor observation rather than in active work with students, teachers or parents. In terms of urban access and education, however, Amy had only positive things to say about the experience:

Now I feel more comfortable in an urban environment than a suburban one.

Although my experiences as a child were suburban experiences, my experiences as a professional consist of urban experiences.
In her interviews, Amy highlighted her class and practicum experiences as central to her understanding and comfort in the urban school environment and the urban environment as a whole. She noted how intense this training from coursework to actual urban experience is, and how often students are asked to “make contact” with communities that are often not their own and work with people from a variety of cultural and economic backgrounds:

I learned to work with urban youth, with parents, get urban teachers on board…even working with the urban community and so much more. I attended after school activities, visited schools, worked on interventions, consulted with teachers…and this was all in an urban environment.

In her final review of the internship training and process, Amy noted that of all parts of the process, she felt “best trained and prepared” for the diversity aspect of the urban school environment. Although she had not entered the program to pursue urban education, and had had mixed feelings concerning the program focus, she came to feel that the urban school was “where I am supposed to be, and where I was trained to be.”

**Internship Experience.**

**Placement.**

Many second year masters students admit that the greatest stress of internship is not the training itself, but waiting to find out one’s internship placement. In the spring of year two, masters students attend a meeting where internship placements are announced following weeks of intensive speculation and faculty consideration. On the table are usually two to three urban placements in the city district, and then many nearby suburban
districts, and a single smaller town district some thirty to forty-five minutes outside the city. The urban placements have one additional benefit: tuition is paid by the district while students complete their internship training. All internships carry a stipend for training paid by the state, but it is only the urban placement that carries the additional benefit, adding to its appeal.

Like the other two study participants, Amy was delighted to be placed in one of the “coveted” urban internship slots, noting that it was not just the tuition remission that made it so attractive, but more its familiarity. After two years of intensive urban coursework and practicum experience, Amy felt that the urban placement was the only one she now understood and wanted to be involved with. She also found the competition for the slots motivating:

Some people were very vocal about wanting to be there. I wasn’t, but then you’d talk to old students and they’d say how either they were thrilled to be placed in the urban district or they’d wanted to be in the urban district and weren’t chosen. I got on board with that and wanted to be picked, too. Originally it might not have been where I’d want to be placed, but then it became the only place I wanted.

Further adding to the allure, faculty present the placements as highly desirable; there is a suggestion that the top second-year students are placed there. Amy noted that this also added to its desirability, and made her feel as if the slot was a “reward” for hard work and good grades.
(There was only one urban internship slot open to doctoral students, and I was not placed there. I was not disappointed: for many doctoral students, the urban placements are not the main concern, but more, a placement with a licensed supervisor who can provide appropriate supervision as students pursue state psychology licensure. I was pleased to be placed with such a supervisor, though in a suburban district. My placement actually provided an excellent contrast between study participants’ urban experiences and my suburban one.)

Supervisor.

In the beginning, Amy felt less enthusiastic about her new supervisor. Aaron was an Ed.S level veteran of the urban district and had served as one of the two practicum supervisors. Amy had mixed feelings: on the one hand, she had an established relationship with Aaron and was familiar with his approach to school psychology, but on the other hand, she also felt “exasperated” with some of his methods, his tendency to tell long, personal stories during training, and an emphasis on assessment rather than other components of training like intervention or counseling. Her first month of internship, Amy spent much of her time testing, causing her to share disappointment over the fact that “it may just be testing for me this year.” She was also well aware of the heavy caseload in the urban district. Between them, she and Aaron would share three elementary schools with large populations, giving them the potential for forty to fifty initial evaluations and fifteen to twenty reevaluations, along with the necessary parent meetings and screening assessments. It was a heavy load, and Amy felt the need to set some boundaries with Aaron about the separation between her work and home:
I mean, it’s a lot of work. I’m impressed by the amount of work Aaron does!

I know he’s doing work at home and there’s a little bit of an expectation
that I do work at home as well. But I am really trying to separate work
from my home life, and that’s a personal goal for me. It’s easy to fall
into the routine of doing work at home and I want to be upfront with Aaron
about expectations.

As the year progressed and Amy gained greater confidence in her work, she
described “stepping back” from some of her initial reservations about Aaron and seeing
him as a more positive role model. She was particularly impressed when Aaron designed
a screening pilot program to identify at-risk youth at his three schools in order to find the
kids in need of testing who might be missed:

He made a list of these kids for each school and has about 35-45 kids
on each list. Instead of teachers or parents initiating the referral process,
he’s doing it himself. It’s a lot of extra work for him and lots of paperwork to fill
out, but he feels like this is a way to address teacher apathy in these cases.

Amy described this process as Aaron’s way of working around teachers who are reluctant
to refer at-risk youth because they become overwhelmed by the required paperwork.
Instead of continually harassing teachers or complaining about their lack of commitment
to the process, Aaron simply found grade level screening scores that matched well with
his own screening scores, and identified the lowest performing children. Amy described
herself as being “in awe of (Aaron’s) creativity” in dealing with this typical and often
contentious issue between school psychologists and teachers:
All we need now is a simple list of teacher interventions. They don’t have to fill out the 5-6 pages of paperwork because we’ve already done it. Now they can’t dig their feet into the dirt and refuse to do it. It’s a great way to deal with this problem.

**Expectations.**

In interviews, Amy came across as very concerned about internship expectations and had no problems describing herself as intensely “goal-driven.” Not only did she want to make expectations clear with Aaron on day one for her own mental health, she saw clear goals as an important part of receiving adequate training and being able to report on a “variety of experiences and skills” to future employers. Amy actively pursued clear internship goals from the university, feeling that the provided evaluation sheet did nothing to help interns “map this internship journey.” No specific goal sheets were given to students during monthly internship meetings and Amy felt confused about expectations:

I have this old expectations sheet from OSU… I think from a couple of years ago. An old student gave it to me. It’s really, really out of date. I don’t know what’s expected of us this year. I showed the old sheet to the faculty and she told me it was old but they didn’t say what was expected, and they didn’t have any real answers. So, I was kinda trying to ask her “Hey, if you’re going to give us some goals could we have them early on?” But we didn’t get any.
The urban district was able to provide Amy with a list of its own requirements for internship, and Amy mainly stuck to that in order to feel that she’d “accomplished something” that she could show to employers from her training. But despite acknowledging the district goal sheet, Aaron was not on board with Amy’s commitment to completing it. He saw the internship experience as a practical one and not a rote completion of a set number of evaluations or counseling sessions:

(Aaron) didn’t want me focusing on those requirements. He actually told me to “watch myself” because I needed to focus on my schools, not my requirements. I know he doesn’t mean to attack me, but I do feel as if I’m being attacked.

Amy refused to be discouraged by Aaron’s attitude. Over time, Amy felt that she was able to “negotiate” with Aaron concerning the goals sheet, and was able to share that she felt anxiety about the training process when there were no firm, upfront expectations. She told Aaron that she understood that he wanted her to have a more practical experience, but that she wanted to use her extra days in district to pursue these goals and actively contacted other school psychologists in order to work on them in different schools. As part of her training, Amy wanted to take advantage of the sheer number of school psychologists working in the city district, noting that “one of the great things about the (urban district) was having so many psychs to work with and so many schools to find cases in.” Over time, Amy felt that she was able to both see herself as part of a “team” with Aaron – working together on cases and issues in their shared schools -- but also an independent intern, working toward specific, district goals and her own personal
goals. As internship continued to unfold and Amy eventually took over a school of her own, she noted how much she “enjoyed the independence.”

(Like Amy, I went into internship confused about university expectations and my district – a large, suburban one about twenty minutes north of the city – had no goals sheet for interns of its own. I was this district’s first official intern, which added to the initial uncertainty about expectations both on my part and the district’s. My supervisor was a fifteen-year veteran of school psychology and also held a psychology license. She primarily used the university-supplied evaluation sheet to direct experiences for me, but took issue with many of the listed areas of training, stating that they simply weren’t possible in my current placement. When evaluated at the end of each university quarter, my supervisor was often very frustrated that this “grading” sheet did not reflect what we had been doing, or what was even possible in my placement. It was a continual source of frustration for her, and a source of confusion and anxiety for me. We kept coming back to the same question: what were the expectations? We had a map for “how” I should be doing things, but not “what” I should be doing. Personally, I was worried that I wasn’t receiving adequate training because I just didn’t know what was expected of me. To be fair, unlike Amy, I did not pursue specific goals from the university or ask for explanation of the intern competency sheet. Amy was the only participant to open a dialogue with faculty concerning goals. )

Evaluation.

Part of training is evaluation, and Ohio State school psychology interns are not exempt. Though not formally designated, interns are assessed on two levels: first, at the
district level by their supervisors, and second, at the university level by Dr. C, Director of
the internship experience. Official evaluations take place at the end of each quarter, three
times over the internship experience. Supervisors are given the university’s Intern
Competencies/Evaluation packet (Appendix D) and asked to fill it out prior to a meeting
with the intern, and another meeting with Dr. C to discuss results. It is understood that the
majority of the university’s evaluation and thus the intern’s formal grade is informed by
the supervisor’s appraisal of the intern’s work. At its best, this process is intended serve
as an opportunity for interns to receive constructive criticism and focus on areas needing
improvement. At its worst, this process has the potential to irrevocably damage an
intern’s self-confidence.

At first, the Intern Competencies/Evaluation packet appears very simple -- nine
pages of black and white type detailing eleven main areas of assessment:

(a) Data-based Decision Making and Accountability
(b) Interpersonal Communication, Collaboration, and Consultation
(c) Effective Instruction and Development of Cognitive/Academic Skills
(d) Socialization and Development of Life Competencies
(e) Student Diversity in Development and Learning
(f) School Structure, Organization and Climate
(g) Prevention, Wellness Promotion, and Crisis Intervention
(h) Home/School/Community Collaboration
(i) Research and Program Evaluation
(j) Legal, Ethical Practice and Professional Development
(k) Information and Technology

These eleven categories are then further broken down into subsections such as “Assessment Skills” or “Working with Parents/Family” under which appear statements that supervisors are then asked to rate on a scale from zero to three, with zero meaning “no opportunity”, one meaning a “developing skill” to three, suggesting “mastery” of the skill. Rated statement examples include such things as “Verbally communicates findings clearly” or “Sensitive to issues of diversity.” Overall, the supervisor is asked to rate 120 such statements concerning the intern’s performance, and initial each area of rated competency. At the end of the document, the supervisor is asked to provide some additional written commentary on the intern’s strengths and/or areas needing improvement. Interns are then also asked to initial each area of competency, and both supervisor and intern are asked to sign and date the final page of the document. The addition of areas for the intern’s initials and signature suggests that the evaluation process is to be done with some procedure for the supervisor providing verbal feedback to the intern, with the intern’s acceptance and understanding of the critique. Given its length, number of evaluated categories, and detailed questions, the packet suggests a level of formality that begs for one-on-one discussion between intern, supervisor and university. To a great extent, this document is dictated by standards set by NASP, although individual school psychology programs direct the details of what is put into place regarding internship training.

Amy’s initial expectation was of a relatively standard assessment process with Aaron. Supervisors in the urban district tended to ask interns to work through the
evaluation packet and rate themselves, and then compare their ratings to the supervisor ratings, with the hope of sparking frank discussion of expectation and performance. Yet, midway through fall quarter, Amy and the other city interns were drawn into a meeting with all of the district intern supervisors that Amy described as a “stressful event” that turned the first assessment process into a “circus.” When speaking of the event, Amy appeared irritated that she had been included in such a negative meeting that seemed not to apply to her:

Aaron told me that we were going to discuss some negatives at the meeting that I wasn’t to take personally. He told me that OSU hadn’t prepared us in terms of case conceptualization, and that was something we’d be discussing. He also said that practicum hadn’t prepared us as well as he’d hoped because there’d just been too many students per supervisor, and we’d missed out on training opportunities that are showing themselves now.

Amy took issue with a supervisory feedback session that included all of the interns at the same time, and did not address individual issues of competency. She felt that the process did not help her identify any personal areas for improvement, and did not relate to any of the district’s goals for internship. She was also concerned that the meeting could affect her motivation to complete training exercises and described forcing herself to “speak up” when she felt threatened. She further took issue with the fact that the university seemed completely unaware of the meeting and appeared to have been purposefully left out of the process:

You know, (the district) doesn’t have a history of being happy with OSU…
It’s a codependent relationship…they drive one another crazy but they need one another…

When asked to describe her feelings about the meeting, Amy stated that she had literally “tuned out” of the process because Aaron had reassured her that it did not apply to her. Amy was able to pull on her honest relationship with Aaron to survive this group critique. She noted that Aaron had discussed the meeting with her prior to the event, and that his insistence that she “not take things personally” and her own commitment to speaking in her own defense had saved her from losing confidence in her training and ability. She reported that once Aaron had told her that “it didn’t have anything to do with (me)” that she stopped listening to some of the damaging comments made by other supervisors concerning all of the interns and was able to distance herself from the “drama.”

When her formal evaluation took place with Aaron at the end of fall quarter, Amy was relieved to participate in a “good process” where she was able to “work together” with Aaron to paint an accurate picture of her first quarter performance. Believing that she still had a lot to learn about being a good school psychologist, Amy reported that she “low balled” her scores in most areas of competency, but was pleasantly surprised when Aaron rated her more positively. Overall, Amy found the evaluation process with Aaron to be a very encouraging one, ascribing the positivity to Aaron’s honesty with her and willingness to listen to her personal goals concerning internship. But, Amy felt the absence of the university throughout the assessment process. While aware that the university had met with Aaron and discussed her performance, she received no personal
feedback from the university at any point over internship, and never discussed her evaluation packet with a faculty member. She was unable to describe how her evaluation packet had helped to determine her grade in the course.

**University Intern Meetings.**

Over the course of internship, interns attend monthly two to three hour required meetings with fellow interns and Dr. C, Director of the internship program; these meetings are a requirement of university school psychology programs as set forth by NASP. These meetings tend to be relatively informal in structure, with some meetings focused toward the sharing of open cases or discussion of internship experiences, and others with specific topics presented by school psychologists in the field, such as crisis intervention and working with English Language Learner (ELL) students. The course syllabus states that course objectives for interns are the acquisition of preparedness in the eleven areas of competency established by NASP (detailed on the Intern Evaluation/Competency Sheet, Appendix E). Amy attended all the monthly meetings but found most of them irrelevant to the work she was doing on internship:

I feel like I’ve already cut the apron strings. I feel like it happened a long time ago. It’ll be nice not having to go to the internship meetings. I just don’t get much out of them, you know? I feel like I just want them to give me my licensing information and just send me on my way.

While Amy liked getting together with her fellow interns to share case experiences or just “vent about all the assessment we’re doing,” she failed to see the point of coming together for learning sessions that “were not applicable to what (I) am doing in the
district” or forums where she could not discuss her personal issues with faculty, or learn about specific university goals for internship. As the year progressed, she described finding the meetings “less and less necessary” because she had created her own personal goals and had adopted the district’s expectations for the experience. In the end, all she wanted from the experience was the “right paperwork to apply for (my) license.” In her final assessment of her internship experience, Amy rated the university internship meetings as one of the least effective components of the entire training process.

**Experience of Hope.**

In her very first interview – completed during the first month of internship – Amy immediately presented herself as someone who was goal driven and motivated, noting that she wanted to be “upfront” with her supervisor about his expectations and also clear about her personal goals for the experience. Likewise, in her initial internship questionnaire, Amy began identifying personal goals for the experience – things such as “becoming more confident” and “building a strong relationship with my supervisor” -- and presented agency (or motivational) statements such as “I don’t think anything stands in my way” and pathways (or “how to”) statements such as “I plan on achieving these goals by working hard.” When describing the “high hope” individual, Snyder (2000) highlights both the importance of clear goals and agency and pathways statements and beliefs – this individual knows where he or she would like to go, understands how to get there, and has the drive to do so. Amy jumped into her internship experience with all three, strong facets of hopeful thinking: goals, pathways and agency. From the beginning, she felt that her coursework and practicum experience had prepared her for the urban
school environment, and she felt confident that she could successfully complete her internship experience.

During her first month of internship, Amy actively pursued clear and specific goals from both the university and the district in order to satisfy her desire to complete a full training experience. She understood that she “needed to keep herself focused.” After discovering a list of district requirements for the experience, Amy began slowly completing those goals even when her supervisor discouraged her. Here again, Amy presented a strong sense of both pathways and agency thinking: she was able to negotiate with her supervisor to continue to pursue her list of goals while still working as a “team” with him on the more practical, everyday needs of her schools. Amy noted that while her supervisor was not always on board with her goal-directed activity, he came to respect her tendency to “take on a leadership role.” Amy went on to contact other school psychologists within the district to work on a wide variety of cases and experiences. Again, these experiences were not requirements per se, but came to be a part of Amy’s personal goals for the overall internship training. Amy showed that though specific goals were not immediately presented to her, she was willing to push to identify them, and found ways to complete them – clear, hopeful behavior.

As internship continued, Amy’s commitment to a variety of independent training experiences built her confidence, and she began to feel that she could approach difficult cases or situations with greater skill. Some of this confidence came from watching Aaron. While her relationship with her supervisor was not always perfect, Aaron modeled successful hopeful behavior to Amy on several occasions – showing her how to address
teacher dissatisfaction with classroom assessment, how to create a screening process for at-risk students, and how to appropriately deal with the negative feedback of other school psychology supervisors. Amy continually noted that Aaron was able to handle the high caseload in the district with humor and relative ease, and that he pursued collegial relationships with other staff members even on his own free time. This mentoring of hopeful behavior inspired Amy to take on difficult cases independently:

Sometimes I want to take the easy way out and just call Aaron, but more and more I know what to do. There was a difficult behavior case and I knew what to tell the mom. I just told her to begin tracking the child’s behavior…getting the data, you know? I felt that once I had the data, I could make an informed decision about how to help. I also know that classroom observation tells me so much about how to help a child, so I’ll begin with that.

Yet, despite enjoying her independence and embracing her own decision-making capability, Amy also wanted regular feedback from both her supervisor and the university regarding her performance; she desired some critique of her goal directed activities. Aaron was able to satisfy some of this need during regular, quarterly evaluation sessions, but Amy still felt that it was “hard to get regular supervision time in.” Amy also bemoaned the lack of involvement from the university, citing the negative district meeting with interns early in the year and the ineffective monthly internship meetings, which left her “so done with OSU.” She also stated that more case studies during university internship meetings would have helped her “figure out different ways of doing
things” and would have made these regular, required meetings much more helpful to interns both in terms of learning experiences and emotional support from both fellow students and faculty.

When asked about her hopeful behavior, Amy claimed that her urban training and previous work experiences provided her with both motivation and an understanding of how to get things done in the more challenging environment of the urban school. She noted that she felt she was “naturally goal-directed” but could have done even more if she had had a greater understanding of what her supervisor and the university wanted from her and had received more constructive feedback each quarter. In her last interview, Amy continued to identify training goals for the future, stating that she was satisfied with her internship experience, but still wanted to “take on” new tasks such as “speaking as a professional” and “more counseling cases.” Amy was pleased to be able to offer potential employers a full list of completed training goals.

As stated in Chapter 3, Snyder’s Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (1991) can be used to measure subjects’ levels of hope in various settings and at different times of life. Snyder (2002) posits that though hope is a relatively stable construct over time, it can vary significantly in response to life challenges and/or stressors and also be affected by hope-building interventions and supports. In this study, the scale was given at the end of the internship training experience in order to provide a brief quantitative measure of participant’s culminating hope levels following the full experience; its inclusion in this study is intended only to enhance participant interviews and observations, not to dominate them. The scale is scored on a 4-point continuum (from 1= Definitely False to
4= Definitely True) with a possible high score of 32; Snyder notes that a “score of more than 24 indicates that (you) think in ways that are very hopeful” (Snyder, 2000, p.59). The scale can be broken down into an agency score (four items) and pathways score (also four items); four questions serve as distractors. Pathways and agency items are then totaled for the overall hope score. Amy completed the scale following her final interview in the spring of 2010; she had only a few more weeks of internship to complete and defined herself as “finished with this process.”

Amy’s Adult Dispositional Hope Scale scores are strongly reflective of her initial goal-directed behavior and high hope experience over internship. Amy’s total, overall hope score was a 28 out of the possible 32 – by Snyder’s interpretation, a strong hope score. Amy’s pathways score (the “how” of goal completion) was also strong, totaling a 15 out of a possible 16; her agency, or motivation, score totaled a 13 out of a possible 16 – also a solid score. All three scores reflect Amy’s ability to identify ways to complete internship goals – personal and professional – and motivation to succeed in doing so. Qualitative data collected throughout Amy’s internship experience suggest that Amy began the year with high levels of individual hope and maintained these levels throughout the experience.

**Final Thoughts.**

In her final interview, Amy was clearly looking forward to finishing with internship training and the impending freedom of any university supervision. Part of this seemed to be the natural progression of moving out of a graduate training program – no more tuition bills, training, or supervisory critique – but part of it also was a desire to
remove herself from what she termed the “politics” between the university and central
city district, and pursue her goals independently. Even at the end of training, Amy
continued to identify goals for herself: professional speaking, job seeking, learning new
assessment tools, and working with children on the Autism spectrum. She described these
thoughts as “keeping myself focused” while moving into the laziness of the summer
months. She was determined not to regress in any aspect of her training.

Amy’s urban training in no way deterred her from wanting a job in the same
environment. She noted that it was the “only place I really know” and her only hesitation
in accepting an urban position would stem from her understanding of how
“unmanageable caseloads can be.” She noted that while the urban paperwork demand
seemed extreme, she had no idea what to compare it with; she’d never trained in a rural
or suburban district. In a brief phone interview following the end of internship, Amy gave
some final thoughts about her urban school experience:

I’ve definitely learned a lot. The (urban district) is one of my top places to
look for a job. I’ve really always felt that way and then as I started to deal with
some of the politics and the paperwork…blah, blah…I wasn’t sure I could
learn it all. But overall, I like it there. I really do. I would definitely work there,
and I know that I can be successful there.

School psychology jobs in the central Ohio area were hard to come by when
Amy’s intern class completed internship. The urban school district offered only one part-
time slot, and by the time that job became available, Amy had already accepted a part-
time placement in a wealthy suburban district to the north. Amy expressed some
disappointment that she would be working outside an urban district, but also reported that she felt “excited” to learn about being a school psychologist in a suburban district, as she’d had no training experiences there. In the end, Amy felt satisfied that her internship experience had appropriately prepared her for work in her chosen district.

**Trying to Stay Hopeful: The Case of Devin**

**Background.**

Devin normally arrived for interviews clad in a flowing blouse and simple Birkenstock shoes -- clothing that reflected her perspective on life and living: laidback and comfortable. Similarly, Devin was the easiest participant to interview as she described her participation in the study as a kind of necessary “therapy” for herself as she moved through the internship process, and embraced our regular meetings with candid descriptions of her experiences. She described our meetings as a “cathartic process” that allowed her time to process the experience of internship without approaching supervisors or faculty members, or burdening other students unnecessarily. Devin saw conversation as the most meaningful way to understand her training and internalize her experiences – some positive, and many negative.

*(Like Devin, I found that over time, my interviews with participants served the dual purposes of information gathering and cathartic experience sharing. As I began to build trust with participants, we were able to find similarities in our internship experiences and embrace a more mutually supportive relationship – discussing caseloads, moaning about difficult clients, sharing intervention ideas, etc. Though we were placed in different school environments – theirs urban and mine suburban – we were able to discuss)*
differences and commonalities between settings. The participants were curious about my suburban experience as they had only urban experiences, and I, of course, was building study data based on their urban placement. Our relationships began to border on the definition of praxis – a form of action research where the researcher acts upon conditions to change them (Lather, 1986). In Devin’s case, she believed that our meetings served as an outside support system for her internship experience, giving her additional perspective and processing time, and adding to her ability to cope with problems.)

Unlike Amy, Devin was more of a typical graduate student having applied to the school psychology masters program immediately after undergraduate study at Ohio State with no professional experience between programs. In her initial questionnaire, Devin wrote that she’d entered graduate school at the age of twenty-two seeking to take advantage of funding she received through the Ohio State writing center where she worked as a tutor. Devin admitted that OSU’s school psychology program’s urban focus had little to do with her decision to apply:

I wouldn’t say the urban focus had any bearing on my decision –
I thought it was an interesting and helpful aspect of the program but
I was more swayed by the possibility of funding and a general love for OSU.
I also wanted to study and work with the GLBT population and (at the time)
one of the faculty was studying that. So, I was interested in diversity, but
more so sexual diversity than racial or cultural diversity.

Devin described becoming interested in school psychology as a field after working in her suburban high school’s “Partner’s Club” which linked regular education
high school students with special needs teenagers for social outings and events. Devin also volunteered regularly with Special Olympics throughout high school and college and found meaning in working with children with disabilities, though she had no familial or personal experience with disabilities or mental health issues. Devin was also attracted to the possibilities for counseling in the school environment. While working with special needs children was her primary goal, she also wanted opportunities to provide one-on-one therapy to students with mood issues or other mental health problems. She felt that school psychology might be a field that allowed her to do both in the school setting.

**Urban Experience.**

Growing up white in her primarily middle-class suburb outside Cincinnati, Devin had limited experiences with urban populations. Other than the occasional volunteer opportunity with her church or school, Devin described little contact with different populations, and stated that most adults in her world tended to “associate ‘urban’ with ‘minority’ and also lower socioeconomic status.” Devin noted that even when her sports teams regularly traveled to urban schools for games, parents and coaches “framed these urban environments as being very separate from ours” and there was a strong sense of difference. Given this background, Devin did not hesitate to state that she felt initially hesitant about OSU’s program philosophy:

I was nervous about the possibility of being a white girl working in a mostly minority district. I’ve always been accepting of diversity…but I am more interested in other types of diversity and that sort of thing…so I was hoping the program would focus on that somewhat.
Training.

In her first quarter of graduate study, Devin – like Amy – sat through the eye-opening Cultural Diversity class led by Dr. C and followed it with the second year Urban Experiences course. Devin felt both classes supplied her with a wealth of knowledge about cultural difference – strong class discussions, engaging readings and films, and practical experiences in urban settings – but still felt hesitant about moving into practicum in the central city district:

I did feel prepared; I think we had more formal (through classes) and informal (through practical experience) training than most programs. At the same time, I don’t think just by reading articles and books and by listening to class discussion that you ever feel entirely prepared to go into an environment that isn’t comfortable. You just have to do it and mess up and figure it out for yourself.

Devin described being surprised by the sheer amount of diversity training she received prior to her internship placement, stating that she hadn’t “anticipated going into this that (we’d) spend as much time on it as we have.” Her comments did not suggest disappointment with this training, but more a kind of shock: she hadn’t initially understood how much she had to learn about urban environments, cultural diversity, and differences between her own background and that of others. With the addition of her year-long practicum experience in the central city district – sharing the same supervisor as Amy – Devin’s familiarity with urban environments grew to the point where she described it as finally “taking the edge off” some of the negatives of urban environments.
I was at a really hard school for practicum. I mean the staff is not very good. It’s over 99% free and reduced lunch…so it’s a very extreme environment. And I feel that because we got our feet wet with urban districts and how they tend to have some of those qualities, I wasn’t as shocked as I would have been without the training.

Despite the intensity of the training, Devin still felt unsettled when she began her practicum experience, stating that she was still “surprised to see all of it in real life.” Relating with children in seemingly desperate circumstances was the most overwhelming part of her experience:

To see these kids coming to school, like, wearing clothes that smell horrible or saying things, like, they had to cook dinner for their younger brothers and sisters and it’s like a second grader….and you’re thinking, “Really? Where are your parents?” Those kinds of things are tough for me. But I wasn’t as surprised by it because at least we’d had some exposure to it.

Devin also described feeling intimidated by urban school staff members while on practicum, never sure if her anxiety was due to her perceived negativity about the urban work environment or just the nature of being younger and less experienced than veteran teachers, counselors and administrators. She acknowledged that she had no professional work experience having come straight into the program from undergraduate, and also no training in suburban or rural settings. Thus, she had no point of comparison:

I don’t know if my feelings had to do with it being an urban district or because I just didn’t know what I was doing yet. I mean, these people are, like,
20 years older than me and they’ve been in the field forever…but then, a lot the staff seemed to be middle class and there’s a lot less diversity in the staff…and there’s negativity. I don’t know if it’s just them reacting to the stress of the students…but they seem more on edge.

In spite of her insecurities, Devin felt that her training gave her the emotional ability to see negative circumstances, acknowledge them, and then move past them in order to complete the work that she needed to do – some of which aided at-risk children and their parents. When entering her internship year, Devin believed that her diversity training -- while more extensive than she had initially bargained for -- had made it possible for her to work productively in an urban school environment.

**Internship.**

**Placement.**

Devin was thrilled to be placed with Amy in the central city district for internship but wasn’t sure why. She reported that she found it “fascinating to talk about the placement process” because while she was excited to find herself in one of the coveted urban internship slots, she still felt a strong sense of trepidation about the placement because she believed “the stress level there is just higher because of all the environmental factors going on.” She continually referred to her placement with this mixture of enthusiasm and marked reluctance, calling it a “hard, hard environment” that could be tough on some of the “softer students” – a phrase she used to describe masters students less likely to speak up or question things. During our placement discussion, Devin voiced
a fascination with what she called the “framing” of the urban district by the faculty as the most positive placement, almost like a reward for hard work:

I’m not entirely sure why I was excited to be placed in the (urban district).

I think, though, that part of it – and this is kinda funny – it was really built up to us. There was, like, all this propaganda about how great it was…it was, like, the place to be. So part of it was definitely that…a lot of my excitement was how much the faculty talked up the placement. Do they frame it that way? For a reason?

Devin also described feeling a sense of relief with the placement because she literally had no professional experiences with rural or suburban districts and had no idea what to expect working in those environments. She reflected that part of her happiness over the central district slot was because it was familiar to her – two years of training in urban coursework and practical experience had made her “comfortable” with the environment, but not immune to its stressors. Of all the central city interns, she was most candid about some of her negative perceptions of the environment:

It’s going to be harder to do the work. The buildings just aren’t very nice.

That seems like a trivial thing, but you’re in there and there are cockroaches In your office, and you’re testing in a bathroom or a closet…that stuff can really make a difference.

(I, too, had no professional experiences in suburban school environments as I headed into my suburban internship placement. I’d received the same training as the other interns – all urban experiences – but had no reservations about working somewhere new.)
Devin and I discussed how suburban placements were also familiar to us simply because it’s where we’d gone to school ourselves – we may not have worked in those environments, but they’d colored our entire pre-college learning experiences and would never be completely foreign. Like Devin, I knew well that school placements in the urban district could be tough, and had dealt with angry staffers and poor working conditions while on practicum. While I felt I could have handled an urban internship, part of me continued to be relieved that I wouldn’t have to take on the added pressures of heavy caseload, time constraints, and possibly more negative staff interactions. In comparison, I naively expected no surprises from my suburban placement, and also anticipated good physical working conditions. On some things, I anticipated correctly, but not all.)

Supervisor.

When speaking of her supervision experience, Devin rather cynically noted that of all the interns, she’d been “lucky enough to be doubly blessed” with not just one supervisor, but two: Sam, an Ed.S level school psychologist serving primarily elementary schools and Margeaux, a PhD. level school psychologist with mainly high school placements. Thus, Devin would begin internship with two supervisors sharing her training, and a grand total of seven school placements – two high schools, one middle school, and four elementary schools. The responsibility of living up to the expectations of two supervisors and traveling between the various schools made Devin’s head spin. She worried about satisfying the expectations of both supervisors and being able to build relationships with staff members at so many schools:

The whole thing is kind of stressful and weird. I like some aspects of it
because I’m not following one of them around like a shadow all the time, but it gets confusing between all the buildings and staffers and because one of them will want something one way and the other wants it another way, and I just never seem to get it right between them.

Despite the added pressures of dealing with two supervisors, Devin initially described her relationship with both supervisors in relatively positive terms. She appreciated that they both treated her “as a professional” and took pains to introduce her to school staff members and parents as professional person rather than as a student, leading her to feel more confident in her abilities and also a little “frightened of all the responsibility of that label,” which she took in stride. Devin described Sam as providing much more support than Margeaux and felt she could easily approach him with any questions of concerns. She noted that Margeaux – while not outwardly dismissive of her – tended to expect her to work very independently most of the time and often seemed bothered by her questions. Devin worried that this autonomy so early in her internship year caused her to make “many, many mistakes that (Margeaux) was then critical of.” She noted that the extensive urban caseload seemed to make these mistakes even more stressful for Margeaux and in turn, more stressful for her:

I take on the caseload because it’s part of their expectation for me, but for my one supervisor – it’s just so hard when I make mistakes. She’ll say things like “You need to get this right. You need to be on this. We don’t have time for this.” And I’m, like, I’m doing the best I can! I have so many cases to do!
Unlike Amy, who had built up professional confidence with several years of work experience under her belt, Devin did not feel comfortable speaking to Margeaux about her own goals for internship, or about the more critical nature of their relationship. And as internship progressed into quarter two, the relationship continued to deteriorate until Devin asked to break with Margeaux as a supervisor and continue only with Sam:

I didn’t think she could stand me. Our personalities just didn’t jive at all.
I think we survived the first quarter and I’d even say I learned some valuable things from her but I didn’t get any feedback from her at all.
I’d finish a report and she’d get upset with me because I hadn’t asked her questions ahead of time…but my feeling was that it was so early in the game that I didn’t even know enough to ask the right questions! She basically wasn’t supervising me or watching anything I was doing, and then would get mad at me when things weren’t exactly the way she wanted them.

It was early in her internship training and Devin craved a mixture of independence and direct supervision that Margeaux was unable to provide. She also chafed at all the perceived criticism, the belittling comments, and felt that so little direct contact with Margeaux made it impossible for her to see her as a mentor figure, or adopt any of her successful methods working with parents, teachers or other staff members. In short, Devin felt she drew nothing from a continuing professional relationship with Margeaux; Devin rated her as the person she was “least likely” to use as a model for professional behavior as a school psychologist in her final internship experience survey.
Fortunately, the university was able to support Devin’s decision to break with Margeaux, and Devin was able to implement the separation with relatively little pain.

In contrast, Devin was able to see Sam as a strong mentor for positive and appropriate behavior as a school psychologist, and as a model for problem solving in an often contentious and difficult urban environment. She described Sam’s ability and motivation to figure out solutions to complex problems as one of the main reasons she felt lucky to have him as a supervisor:

He takes big issues that other psychs would treat as a real crisis and… uses his personality…he’s very, “well, this sucks but let’s figure it out.” He’s always very sure that there’s a solution to the problem and we’re going to figure it out together. Or, if I’ve made a mistake he doesn’t freak out and scream about how we’re going to get sued like my other supervisor, but just says that we’ll find a way to fix it and shows me how. He’s always looking for ways around bad situations and keeps his cool. Even with small crises, he’s encouraging me to think about different possible solutions.

Devin also felt inspired by Sam’s ability to handle personal conflict with staff members and parents in ways that were assertive, but not aggressive. She noted that he was able to “get his point across” and sometimes “change aggressive dynamics” without offending anyone or becoming pushy and/or defensive. Devin described Sam as popular with staffers in his buildings, a label not often given to school psychologists who often are accused of delivering endless paperwork and increasing school bureaucracy:

One of the principals from our schools told me that no matter what, he
wants to keep (Sam). He told me he’s never liked his school psychologist before and now he had him and he’s been with him for a few years now and wants no one else. That’s such a great thing for me to see. With other supervising psychs, that’s just not the case, you know? With my other supervisor, you could just tell that staffers didn’t respect her.

Over the course of her internship, Sam was able to provide Devin with the right mixture of support and autonomy, and serve as a strong model for problem solving and professional collegiality. On reflection, Devin described her supervisory experience as “beginning badly, but ending up really great.” For Devin, Sam was “a great model for me. I can emulate him and feel confident as a school psychologist.”

**Expectations.**

While Devin was able to articulate her personal goals for internship training, like Amy, she had difficulty identifying university expectations for the internship year:

I don’t know what the program’s goals are for us. I think I have this vague idea that they just want us to become competent school psychologists, but I am still not entirely sure of the goals. Our discussion at the internship meeting was confusing to me because we’ve already spent a month in the schools and I’m still not sure what (the faculty) want from us.

Though Devin felt the lack of university requirements and continually commented that she was “confuse(d) about what we’re doing or why we’re doing it,” she did not address the issue with faculty and did not actively pursue a concrete list of expectations. Still, like Amy, she was presented with an old list of internship expectations from her
urban district – a list that she felt served as “helpful opportunities” but not as a series of experiences she had to relentlessly pursue. Further, her supervisor saw the list as a relaxed template for training experiences and did not push Devin to complete requirements that didn’t occur organically in her school settings:

Yeah, I look at the (district) list every once in awhile. I am pretty sure I’m not the stickler that Amy is, but every once in awhile my supervisor will ask how I’m coming on them and I’ll tell him that they’re going pretty well…and then I’ll look at the list and think, “ugh.” Most of the requirements are just being completed naturally, and maybe my supervisor is just creating opportunities for them to be completed, but I think they just come up in my schools. I haven’t been that concerned about them. If I don’t finish all of them, it won’t kill me.

Despite her more relaxed attitude concerning university and district expectations for internship, Devin spoke animatedly about her personal goals for the experience. Devin was keenly aware that she had little professional work experience and continually described herself with terms such as “too young” and “inexperienced.” For her, building a strong sense of professional confidence through successful work interactions and case completions was paramount:

I just want to feel like I am professional and an adult. I went straight from undergrad to grad school and I don’t think it’s in my nature to feel like a professional person…but that’s important to me. I want to feel professional as a person. I want to feel like I can speak with people
who have way more experience and who are way older than me, and still feel I have something to offer.

Devin saw internship as an opportunity for building up her self-concept; her greatest challenge would be “learning to improve my self-concept without becoming completely overwhelmed.” For this to occur, Devin pursued continued feedback from her supervisor, and desired time to “process” her experiences in an appropriate way with her supervisors and with faculty. Over the course of her meetings, Devin described our interviewing process as part of this “processing,” but bemoaned the lack of involvement from the university. For Devin, her central personal goal leaned heavily on evaluation; she believed that feedback was essential to addressing any lack of professionalism and building her self-confidence.

Evaluation.

In general, Devin found her quarterly supervisory evaluation sessions a satisfying experience. Following the same process as Amy, she and her supervisor each used the university supplied Intern Competencies/Evaluation to each rate her performance in the eleven key categories – Devin presenting her ratings first, then her supervisory sharing his own, with an immediate discussion on the perceived differences. Overall, Devin found this one-on-one feedback process empowering:

I like the system of me doing it first and then going over it with my supervisor because it’s…it’s…more fostering. It’s less threatening to me rather than (Sam) just coming to me with his ratings and being, like, “This is how I rated you.” I would have been caught between thinking he was insulting or really
too nice, you know? When I did it first, I was able to process my performance. I was able to really think about how well I was doing. I could identify what I wanted to work on.

While Devin responded well to these quarterly sessions with Sam and drew valuable insights about her performance from their quarterly meetings, she struggled to understand why the central city intern supervisors drew all three interns into a “highly critical” meeting midway through their first quarter of work. Unlike Amy, she’d had little verbal preparation for the meeting from Sam, and what she did have seemed vague and negative. She did not feel confident enough so early in internship to question Sam any further:

I was told maybe a week ahead of time and it was framed like we were having a meeting because “You guys aren’t doing what you’re supposed to be doing” which was both very vague and very alarming to me. So, I was very nervous about it. I wanted personal feedback that was clear, you know?

Devin described the meeting as intense and “embarrassing”, with all the central city interns sitting at a table facing their supervisors, forced to discuss their personal shortcomings in front of everyone. To Devin, who deeply valued district feedback, the experience bordered on intolerable because she felt it both humiliated her and supplied no specific constructive criticism. In Devin’s mind, she’d worked hard to achieve district expectations as she understood them under Sam, and had no specific goals from the university to work toward. She felt she was achieving what she needed to achieve:

The focus of discussion was supposedly about how we were all behind,
but there was no talk of *how* we were behind. I was working hard and had done everything they’d asked me to do. I didn’t know we were behind. No one had said that we were until now.

Timing was also an issue: it was still early in fall quarter and the interns had been officially on the job for only two months. Devin couldn’t understand how she was being held accountable for poor training when she’d barely begun work. She described feeling “punished for failing to take initiative” when she “didn’t even know what (I) was doing yet.” Devin believed she had to learn how to function in the new environment before she took on a leadership role of any kind, particularly when university expectations were unclear and district goals seemed relatively fluid.

As Devin’s biggest personal goal was one of building professionalism, being forced to discuss her shortcomings in front of other interns and supervisors was particularly demoralizing. In her interviews, Devin never came across as a reticent or reserved person, but rather, she seemed quite candid about her impressions and experiences. Yet, she found the process of “listing my failures in front of everyone” antithetical to processing her internship training in any healthy or meaningful way:

I think I’ve actually blocked part of the meeting out of my memory. It was so bad. At some point we had to go around the table and in front of everyone – the other interns and supervisors – talk about what we thought our personal weaknesses were, and what was holding us back. It doesn’t seem real to me now…just so depressing and embarrassing. Why did I have to do it in front of everyone? I felt like I was thrown under the bus! It wasn’t
constructive at all.

Months after the experience, Devin continued to bring up the meeting for discussion during our interviews because she felt she still needed to “process what had happened” with someone not directly involved. She described feeling abandoned by the university during the process, and seemed to blame the “tensions” between the central city district and university for the negativity of the meeting. She felt that both OSU and the district had failed to communicate what they wanted from interns over the course of their initial practicum training, and then in turn, the district blamed the interns for not being prepared:

The more I think about it the more I believe it was about our supervisors and their issues with OSU. I mean, I was trained in the district while on practicum, and the supervisor who trained me was sitting at the table! If they felt we weren’t prepared then it really reflected on them. And they blamed it on OSU, saying they didn’t prepare us. But aren’t they supposed to agree on our training together? What were the goals for us and how did we fail them? If they are so angry at OSU then why do they keep taking interns?

Devin concluded that she shouldn’t take the “dark relationship” between the university and district personally, but the experience continued to color her overall impression of internship. She described feeling angry that the district had taken out district-university tensions on the interns and also abandoned by the university during the process. In her final study questionnaire, Devin rated her perception of the “communication issues” between the district and university as being one of the biggest
obstacles to her success on internship. In our final interview during spring quarter – months after the meeting -- Devin still seemed rattled by the experience. She noted that it made her reluctant to pursue a job in the district:

It’s still so hard not to take the experience personally. I still ask myself why I was treated so terribly when I was working so hard. I know I’m not stupid! Why would they treat me like that? I don’t want to be where they don’t want me, you know?

(The evaluation process in my suburban district was also challenging; it was clear that many of my personal expectations – more access to time for academic intervention, for example – were not highlighted as important goals by the district. In contrast to the experiences of the participants, Dr. C sat in on my evaluation with my supervisor on a quarterly basis, and this shared feedback was important for me in terms of clarifying steps I needed to take to fulfill goals and district contributions to this process.)

University Intern Meetings.

Devin continually spoke of her desires to find opportunities to verbally process her internship experiences with others in order to grow professionally -- one on one with supervisors, with fellow interns, during study interviews, and also with faculty. When asked to discuss the monthly university internship meetings, she expressed disappointment that what seemed to her “such an obvious place for sharing” wasn’t often used for that purpose. By the middle of winter, only one of five meetings had included a long session in which interns were encouraged to talk about positive and negative personal training experiences. While interns had presented client case studies at each
meeting – sharing assessment scores and final evaluation results – Devin noted that these reports didn’t provoke a sense of problem-solving amongst the interns because in most cases, they appeared in final form: the problems had already been solved in the school environment and clients assigned either a disability category or intervention service. Given that her district internship supervisors had complained about the interns “weak skills in the areas of case conceptualization,” Devin thought that university meetings might serve as a venue for thinking about new cases and how to approach them, thus improving their skills in that area:

The internship meetings that are most valuable to me are the ones where we can all talk together and get feedback from each other and Dr. C on cases and experiences…you know, figure out together how to do things we’re confused about. Supervisors might like that because it would supplement our training.

In contrast, Devin spoke of enjoying the two sessions when outside professionals presented information on the topics of crisis management and assessing ELL students. While she still wished that all sessions could include sharing sessions, she also liked hearing from people in the field who were working with different populations or trying new interventions or assessments. Yet overall, Devin rated her university intern meeting experiences as some of the least effective parts of internship, stating that “with all the other things we have to do, I feel like it’s a waste of time right now. Even if we’d just been able to talk amongst ourselves about our experiences, it would have been better.”
University internship meetings weren’t always satisfying for me, either, and I began to see them more as just one more thing I had to do rather than an opportunity to learn something new or process training experiences. As a doctoral student, I was one of oldest students in the room and felt removed from the masters level students experiences. Though we were all on internship together, I’d already had two other rotations in a hospital and private practice setting, and had worked with several different supervisors. Given this, it was sometimes hard for me to identify with some of their professional issues and concerns; I wasn’t going on the job market right away and wasn’t worried about my resume or license. My goals were very different: this was another rotation I needed to complete before writing my dissertation. Despite this difference, I shared with Devin a desire for more time to problem-solve with the group about cases or issues with supervisors. By this point in my training, I’d already attended workshops on crisis intervention and working with ELL populations. Now I needed some time to process school-based experiences. I agree with Devin that it would have been more valuable for me to both share my school experiences with others, and hear from them as well.)

Experience of Hope.

From the beginning, Devin did not present herself as someone who was extremely concerned about university or district expectations for her internship experience. She described being “aware” that there were no specific university goals, but unlike Amy, was never personally driven to ask for them, and was never worried that the lack of them would negatively affect her performance. She also expressed somewhat limited interest in the district goals for internship, stating that she believed that “(Amy) is obsessed with
them” but that she herself was not. Yes, she noted that she was working on completing some of those goals at her supervisor’s request, but she was not concerned if some went undone. Devin’s comments suggested that she understood the experience to be a more practical one, and that some of the more specific, written goals could not be completed in her school placements:

I mean, I can’t invent cases that don’t exist, you know? Am I supposed to pull an Autism case out of thin air? If I don’t have it at my school then I can’t do it. Am I going to tell some kid that he has an emotional disturbance just so I can fulfill the ED requirement? I have to follow what’s available in my schools.

Though not necessarily motivated by university and/or district goals, Devin clearly identified one overarching personal goal for her training. In her initial internship questionnaire, she stated that “becoming confident in my ability as a professional” was central to her counting the year long training to be a success. She particularly wanted to be seen as a professional by others, and “treated with respect” by colleagues, fellow interns and faculty members. Keenly aware that she had limited work experience and had spent the majority of her young twenties in school, both Devin’s agency and pathways statements were focused on meeting her goal of professionalism:

To do this, I plan to pay a lot of attention, ask questions, and accept feedback eagerly. I plan to work actively on my self-concept and confidence as a professional by working on self-imposed Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, talking with other interns, and working with faculty and supervisors.
According to Snyder’s definition of Hope Theory (2000) where high hope requires strong and specific goals, agency and pathways statements, Devin’s more laidback approach to the internship process may not initially appear as “hopeful” as Amy’s. Yet, Devin was deeply committed to one clear goal – professionalism – and was able to explain how she intended to meet it: by questioning others and herself, accepting feedback, paying attention to the actions of her supervisors, and “challenging (my)self to learn and improve (my) self-concept.” Devin’s motivation to complete this goal was clear throughout the year as she continually referred to her passion to be “treated as a professional” and find “opportunities to process feedback.”

Devin’s progress toward her goal – and in turn, her motivation to complete it and understanding of how to complete it – was significantly affected by the extremely negative first quarter meeting with interns and supervisors. In essence, Devin’s comments concerning that experience described a shattering of any confidence she’d built in her first months of training; she’d been “working hard” to “do what they wanted me to do” and now – facing down fellow interns and other supervisors – she was reduced to identifying her professional weaknesses during her first quarter of work in front of the very people she sought to impress. Devin emerged from the experience unable to distinguish precisely what she’d done wrong or how she was supposed to improve, and naming the very people she’d wanted to emulate as the people who “threw me under the bus.” Though Devin’s one on one quarterly feedback sessions with her supervisor did repair some of this damage by providing constructive professional feedback, Devin continued to refer to this meeting throughout interviews as “hugely demoralizing.” In our
final interview at the end of internship, she stated that it started a “huge depression in me.”

Devin responded to questions about her hope experience by pointing to her relationship with Sam as a catalyst for repairing some of the damage incurred by the first quarter meeting. Though her relationship Margeaux did little to provide her with positive mentoring or the constructive feedback she craved, she felt that Sam provided her with the support she needed, and served as a “coach” for hopeful behavior by effectively problem-solving and pursuing congenial relationships with other staff members and parents. In mid-January, both Sam and the university encouraged Devin to take over one of Sam’s schools as its sole school psychologist, a push that allowed her to achieve a level of professional independence. In short, Devin began to achieve the professional respect she’d worked toward:

It made me feel so much better. The more independence I got and the more I started working with just Sam and in my own school, the easier it got. I felt so much better. Sam believes I can do it on my own.

Devin’s Adult Dispositional Hope Scale scores in part reflected her continued commitment to professional growth and earning the respect of colleagues and faculty. Devin’s total, overall hope score was a 24 out of a possible 32 – by Snyder’s interpretation, a score that is right on the border between highly hopeful thinking and an average hope mindset. The overall score may reflect Devin’s struggle to overcome the demoralizing first quarter intern meeting, and her confidence-building independence as sole school psychologist of her own school. Devin’s pathways score was strong, totaling
a 15 out of a possible 16; yet, in contrast, her agency or motivation score was not strong, totaling just 9 out of a possible 16. While Devin’s independence and mentoring by Sam may have contributed to a high pathways score – Sam serving as a strong model for problem-solving behavior – her motivation, or agency, was weaker. Devin continued to feel demoralized by the negative events and poor relationships that had colored the early internship experience. Though her increased independence and relationship with Sam had begun to repair some of this damage, she felt hesitant about a future with the district:

I guess I will apply in the district. I hated it in the beginning of the year, and it was other factors, not the kids or the schools. It’s huge how much your supervisor affects how you see things, and how one event affected things.

It affected how I see the whole district, really.

Final Thoughts.

During our last interview, Devin joyfully announced that despite the poor economy and dearth of full-time school psychology jobs in the area, she’d found a full-time employment in a wealthy suburban school district to the north of the city. She was the first master’s level intern to find a job. Her excitement over the new position – for which she’d competed with the majority of her fellow interns – seemed to mollify some of her earlier disappointment over her training, and she described feeling as if “all the pain may have been necessary” in order to be successful during the interview process and ready for work. Devin expressed feeling some concern that all of her urban training might not have prepared her for a suburban environment, but she was excited to face “any new challenges” as they appeared. Her final thoughts concerning her internship experience
seemed to be ones of her own personal goals and how she’d achieved them – building a sense of professionalism and refusing to be “upset” by “all the politics in education.” She noted that her year – with “all its ups and downs” had still helped to prepare her for any challenges ahead.

**Struggling to be Hopeful: The Case of Bethanny**

**Background.**

Of all three interns, Bethanny was the only one who expressed concerns about sharing her story of internship with me. Bethanny and I had spent time together before the study began; during my supervision year – a year when doctoral students supervise younger students as part of their training for possible future administrative positions – I’d supervised Bethanny on her practicum experience along with another master’s level student. During our monthly supervision sessions, Bethanny always came across as more intense than other students, more concerned about her performance on practicum and how others were reviewing her work. Due to her self-described “stressful” practicum experience, Bethanny and I established a strong relationship during this supervision experience and I was thrilled to be able to work with her again as part of my doctoral study.

In her initial interview with me, Bethanny shared anxieties that her “words would come back to haunt (me),” particularly as Bethanny was the only one of the three interns who was a person of color. She knew she would be immediately identifiable, and had valid concerns about how candid she could be under those circumstances. Yet, Bethanny also deeply wanted to assist in the process of building theory about the training of urban
school psychologists. Over time, her participation in the study came to serve us both, albeit in different ways.

Bethanny was the youngest of the three district interns and the only one from central Ohio. Raised in the middle-class and predominantly white suburb just northeast of the city, Bethanny described being removed from the urban center of the city due to her parent’s lack of knowledge and familiarity with city life: both parents had grown up in rural West Virginia, and had little experience with either the positives or negatives of central cities. The family’s socio-economic status had also fluctuated during Bethanny’s adolescence, making her parents all the more wary of what they perceived as the poverty of the city, and how their upper-middle class children would relate to it. Thus, they tended to discourage Bethanny and her siblings from venturing far outside the suburban world:

Due to both my parents being from rural and impoverished areas, they had little exposure to urban environments. I don’t think they understood them very well. Because of that, I wasn’t allowed to venture much outside of the suburbs. I had few friends who were not from middle class families and the majority of my social circle was white.

In her initial interview, Bethanny described feeling very removed from her multi-racial heritage while growing up, surrounded as she was by “experiences and activities with only white people” and a limited sense of black culture. She noted that she had been predominantly “socialized as a middle-class white child” and struggled to identify with what her minority peer group determined as her lack of black identity:
I had a lot of experiences with people teasing me about being a “white girl” – you know, the whole “are you a white girl or a black girl?” kind of thing. So, it was more comfortable for me to hang out away from that group, and to hang with white girls, you know? I didn’t feel like my white peers were as harsh about it…I fit in as a middle-class white girl.

It was not until college that Bethanny began to explore her multi-racial heritage and actively pursue relationships with other people of color. She describes this period of her life as a time of “unresolved issues” as she struggled to unite her mainstream upbringing with a desire to explore and understand her cultural difference. Even while attending Ohio State as an undergraduate – a college she had chosen because it seemed larger and more diverse that most other colleges in Ohio – Bethanny found it difficult to find peers of color to relate to:

As it turns out, Ohio State isn’t as diverse as you would think. I just didn’t meet a lot of multiracial or black people in the dorms. It was also me. My background is more similar to a white background than a black background. It isn’t just a culture thing, but a class thing. I grew up middle class and that wasn’t true for some of the other black people.

Bethanny described feeling ostracized when she didn’t like the same kind of music or eat the same kinds of foods as many of her college peers of color, and relayed stories of being accused of shopping in “white people stores” – issues that she attributes again to class differences rather than cultural ones.
Bethanny’s struggles with cultural identity led – in part – to her interest in Ohio State’s urban-focused school psychology graduate program. At the end of her undergraduate education, Bethanny found herself torn between applying to clinical programs in psychology or school psychology programs. Her interest in school psychology as a field had a familial basis: her older brother was diagnosed as a child with a mild cognitive disability, a diagnosis that significantly affected Bethanny’s family dynamic while growing up. She notes that her parents and siblings “continually deal with issues that involves having a family members with a disability” giving her a greater interest in and understanding of how parents and schools work together – ideally – to provide services to children with similar challenges. Ohio State thus seemed a natural choice – a program that would satisfy her desire to study cultural heritage and difference, as well as work in the disability services.

Training.

Bethanny had no reservations about her feelings about the cultural diversity coursework required by Ohio State’s program as part of its urban training: she’d loved both courses and found the information and experiences in both “simply amazing.” In particular, Bethanny found herself drawn to the class discussions with her peers concerning their different cultural experiences. Though the entire cohort was made up of new graduate students in their first quarter of study discussing often contentious or uncomfortable topics of identity, Bethanny blossomed while some of her peers squirmed in their seats:

I was disappointed in my peers because they didn’t feel comfortable sharing
as much as I think they wanted to. I think they hesitated because there were
two black girls in the class and they were unsure how they would take it. One
of the (black) girls was angry or vocal, and they were afraid she’d take
offense at what they said. I think my cohort was quiet, even a little scared.
They weren’t sure about this whole thing. They were feeling each other out.

This course training was the first time Bethanny had felt comfortable using her
voice as a person of multi-racial identity raised in a mainly white, suburban world. Her
cohort may have shared her white, suburban background but not her cultural identity.
Over time, she established close friendships with many of them, but her class experiences
were what enabled her to speak more of her conflicting issues of identity and desire to
explore the urban school environment. While Amy and Devin found both diversity
classes informative and necessary for success in the urban school, Bethanny also found
the training personally empowering.

Like Amy and Devin, Bethanny felt that her course training and required urban
experiences gave her the necessary background to successfully take on her second-year
practicum in the central city district. She liked feeling as if the district had become
familiar to her due to her cohort’s urban interactions; she noted that her courses had
prepared her for “things to be hard”:

We were prepared for many of the difficulties because of our training. It
was disappointing to see how the school was being run, how the kids were
being serviced! Some staff members were just completely ineffective. But,
I think OSU does a good job getting you to understand how these issues
relate to the urban before you get there.

Bethanny’s negative impressions of her practicum experience had little to do with its overall urban placement or her relationship with her supervisors – yes, she had the occasional personal issue with a staff member or complaint about a meeting, but nothing serious. Bethanny’s main complaints were that she was only placed in one school while on practicum, and this limited placement did little to help her understand the scope of challenges in the central city district. She also felt that they’d had low expectations on practicum in terms of case conceptualization and report writing, and she felt ill-prepared for taking on cases independently:

We were only seeing one school and that was a huge disadvantage.

I mean, you see one kind of placement, and if it’s a bad one, then that’s your entire take on the district! If it’s good, then you think it’s going to be easy in the district. I also feel unprepared for internship. I’ve done no solo cases on practicum…I’ve barely written a report, and here I am heading into internship…

Bethanny also explained that she’d suffered from self-confidence issues over the course of practicum, and this, too, had led to a more negative overall impression of the urban district. While she felt that her diversity training had been excellent and she felt well prepared for that aspect of the district, she had less confidence in her assessment and intervention training. She also continued to work through long-held anxieties over how supervisors and faculty perceived her abilities in those areas, which she felt affected her
performance. On the eve of internship, Bethanny still felt highly anxious about whether or not she could be successful as an intern school psychologist.

Internship Experience.

Placement.

Like the rest of her cohort, Bethanny felt a ready sense of competition for the coveted central district internship slots. She concurred that the placements were held up as rewards by the faculty, and she felt determined to get one of them. She noted that not only would her tuition would be fully paid over the course of the placement, but the district was “comfortable” because it was the “place most known to (me).” The sense that she’d come to understand and expect certain things in the district also calmed some of her anxious thoughts about the year long, intensive training:

So the money was a huge factor for many of us. But it was also attractive because we’ve had all our experiences in the district and it’s familiar to me. It’s kinda like it’s no big deal anymore because you can just go there and you already know what you’re doing. You’re used to it and you know what to expect. You’re trained specifically to deal with things there.

Bethanny was thrilled when she discovered she’d been selected for one of the slots, but her weak self-confidence marred the otherwise exciting news. She found herself waffling between feeling hopeful about the year ahead and worried about the perceptions of others. She also expressed concerns that the central city interns were under greater scrutiny than the other interns due to the urban nature of the Ohio State program and the relationship between the university and district:
I was totally, like, “good for me!” but I also feel a lot of pressure now because I feel like other people wonder how I got selected, you know? I try not to question my abilities but I know there are other members of my cohort who would. I also think we’re under more pressure than the other interns because the site and their relationship with Dr. C. It’s a lot to take on.

Supervisor.

Bethanny considered herself lucky to be placed with Christine for supervision. Christine – an Ed.S level school psychologist -- was highly regarded by both the central city district and Ohio State as a professional and as a supervisor and had trained scores of master level and doctoral level students at both the practicum and intern level. Christine was reputed to be tough and exacting, and not given to excessive compliments or positive reinforcement; many former students spoke of her with a mixture of praise and continued fear. Yet, her students tended to be regarded as well trained and highly employable within the district, with a thorough understanding of case conceptualization, assessment, RTI, and the inevitable bureaucracy of school psychology. Bethanny understood that it was a gift to be placed with Christine – but also feared that expectations would be high. In her first interview, Bethanny described feeling “too laid-back” for Christine’s driven ways, and concerned that she’d be unable to adopt some of Christine’s successful skills in the urban environment:

I can see advantages to having Christine as a supervisor. She is so well-regarded, so on top of things and motivated to do things right and solve problems. That’s something I have to learn. I am not sure I am really like that.
I will have to learn to be like that in order to fit the urban need. I think I am too laid-back for an urban district right now.

Both in initial interviews and observations, Bethanny expressed anxieties over her perception of Christine’s “intensity,” describing their relationship as “friendly, but not particularly open” and concerns over her inability to give voice to issues that became apparent as internship moved into its second quarter of training. Bethanny did not find Christine easy to approach or speak with, and felt disempowered by what she termed Christine’s “micromanaging style.” Christine was reluctant to allow Bethanny a measure of independence in assessment, report writing, or meetings with parents and staff, and Bethanny felt stung by the lack of trust in her abilities:

She said she’d be at all my meetings, all the IEPs and stuff like that. I don’t know if its just because I’m the intern or what, but they don’t even include me on the e-mails so I don’t get information I need. Eventually this is supposed to be my building and when staffers ask Christine when she’ll be leaving she says “I’m the supervisor and I have to be here!” So the comments make me think that she’s not ready to let me work independently yet. I internalize that. I don’t think that’s happening to the other interns.

Over the course of internship year, Bethanny continued to waver between an admiration for Christine’s strong problem-solving ability, skills with staff and parents, and work with assessment and intervention, and a disappointment with Christine’s “cold personality” and lack of emotional warmth, particularly as the stresses of internship grew and Bethanny’s self-confidence began to crumble. On reflection, Bethanny realized that
part of the problem was the divide between her need for emotional support and Christine’s drive to properly prepare her for school psychology work in an urban district:

I would still pick Christine as a supervisor above all others. I mean, she knows what she’s doing and is a great model for me. She’s focused on the practical stuff that I need to know. But I need more support. I mean, I guess they felt I needed to be with her for a reason but I don’t thing that it was a good fit for me socially—emotionally.

The highly negative, first quarter intern/supervisor meeting dealt Bethanny’s self-confidence a crushing blow: like Devin, Bethanny was significantly affected in terms of her understanding of her ability level and her faith in the relationship between the district and university program. Bethanny described the meeting as “devastating” and found herself “crying for hours” following the experience. She acknowledged that while her confidence had never been strong, she’d felt fairly good about her internship performance up to this point, and was completely blindsided by the occurrence:

We were pulled into this meeting with all the supervisors and all the interns. They told us were so badly prepared for internship and had no initiative and no leadership skill. Christine gave me no warning about this. I was totally surprised and freaked out. Even though they told us we weren’t to blame for our bad training – they blamed OSU – it was so demoralizing. I’d been working so hard! I still don’t really understand what they want from us, or how we need to change.
Given the differences in their approaches and personalities, Bethanny didn’t feel comfortable approaching Christine to discuss the meeting or its outcome, and didn’t feel that the university even knew that the event had occurred. She walked away from the experience feeling “crushed” and doubting that she wanted to take any future position with the central city district.

(My relationship with Bethanny – again – began to border on praxis during her internship experience, as she sought me out for support and advice outside of scheduled interviews and observations. Bethanny was aware that Christine had served as my practicum supervisor three years prior, and I could identify with her reaction to Christine’s driven personality. I, too, had found myself questioning my abilities over the course of training with Christine, wondering if I was meeting her high expectations or could be trusted with more autonomy. I found that training with Christine was a trial by fire: yes, she strongly prepared you for whatever issues might occur on the job, but she was not easy to approach with concerns and offered little emotional support. I walked away from my training with Christine feeling very capable, but relieved to be done. I empathized with Bethanny’s experience; she appeared to use our interview times to process many of her reactions to her relationship with Christine. She described these meetings as “therapeutic.”)

**Expectations.**

Bethanny’s understanding of university and district goals was vague. Like Amy and Devin, she had an overall sense that internship was supposed to prepare her to work competently as a school psychologist, but she had no awareness of specific expectations
or what her quarterly grade would be based on. When asked about university goals for internship, Bethan seemed surprised about the question and confused. When searching for a response, she equated her internship training with her second-year practicum experience:

I don’t know what’s expected of me on internship. I guess we’ll learn basic common sense psych stuff. We’ll do some cases and get to work on time…stuff like that. You know, I just assume we’ll perform basic job stuff and do our best, but I don’t know any details about it. I think we’re just supposed to do what we did on practicum.

Bethanny didn’t actively pursue goals from the university and did not access the district list of expectations used by both Devin and Amy. By mid-year, Bethanny still had little sense of any particular expectations for her training; she noted that she wasn’t even sure if her supervisor had explicit expectations for her performance:

I don’t know if Christine has goals for me. I’m sure she does but I just haven’t seen any yet and she hasn’t brought any up to me. She definitely has the personality for goals! I mean, she clearly wants me to do well. I just don’t know what it is she wants me to do, specifically.

Bethanny had a stronger sense of her personal goals for internship year, but again, was unable to vocalize many specifics. Given her conversations with faculty and practicum supervisors, she had an understanding that self-confidence was an issue for her and she was determined to “become more comfortable with myself.” She had also entered therapy in order to address her ever-present anxieties, and hoped that continued meetings
would build her assertiveness and help her interact with greater ease with staff and parents. On reflection, she realized that outside of “just wanting to be a competent school psychologist” she had no clear job-related goals. Her general ambition was more personal: she just wanted to stop worrying so much and “let nothing stand in (my) way, especially personal fear.”

**Evaluation.**

The standard quarterly evaluation was relatively unimportant to Bethanny because, as she described it, Christine tended to allow her so little independence that she wasn’t sure what she could be evaluated on. Like Devin and Amy, she went through the quarterly process of ranking her work in the categories specified by the Intern Competencies/Evaluation packet, but she didn’t directly link the categories or rankings to her activities – they just stood as an “overall sense of how I’m doing.” While she described these sessions with Christine as “a positive experience overall,” she expressed concerns that she really had no idea what that meant, or whether or not she was growing in skill and competence; the first quarter negative meeting between interns and supervisors had cast a pall over her skill growth. Since that time, Bethanny tended to believe she was performing poorly, but didn’t know how to change:

That meeting really threw us off our game. We didn’t know if the program hadn’t prepared us right, or if we were bad, or what. Christine always tells me I’m doing “fine” but she gives me no reinforcement, nothing specific. I just don’t know what I need to improve or how to improve.
Bethanny described struggling to meet Christine’s expectations, but when asked about the specifics of those expectations she could not name them. From the beginning of internship, Bethanny’s perceptions of Christine had been colored by rumors of her “high, high levels of expectations,” and her internship experience had – in part – not contradicted this, yet, she could not specifically name what she should be doing differently other than to say that she should “process things faster” and “problem-solve better.” Bethanny noted that she was intimidated by Christine’s stellar reputation as both school psychologist and supervisor, and terrified that she wouldn’t impress her:

Everyone says my supervisor is the best and that’s tough on me. We’re different. I process things more slowly than she does and it makes me feel so stupid. I know she doesn’t do it purposefully. I really do like her and I want to do well. I sometimes just don’t know how. Christine just has this efficient system for everything and I know I am not up to her standards.

Bethanny noted that she received some constructive feedback from Christine during their quarterly evaluation sessions, but her lack of independence just continued to make her question her skill acquisition. Bethanny also complained that she received no “personal feedback from the university” and equated that to a lack of support. Over the course of internship, Bethanny continued to feel confused about how well she was performing, and anxious about how she should address the issue with both Christine and the university.

**University Intern Meetings.**
Interview questions regarding Bethanny’s reactions to the monthly university intern meetings attracted strong commentary: Bethanny had nothing positive to say about them and consistently complained that they served as a burden rather than any form of support system. In fairness, the meetings were never described by the university in terms of providing emotional support; they were intended to be forums for further training and knowledge building concerning school psychology practice, with the added bonus of allowing interns to talk about site experiences and keep up with necessary licensure paperwork. Yet, many of the interns – including Bethanny – wanted the meetings to have a more supportive purpose – a challenge given that the university had taken on the supervision of two additional interns from other school psychology programs. Bethanny complained that it was impossible to share serious concerns in front of students she didn’t know:

Seminar sucks. No one ever asks us how we’re really doing and we all need someone to talk to. I don’t feel comfortable talking during the meetings because we have these students from other programs and we don’t know them. I mean, I don’t want to come out and say “I hate this!” in front of students from other schools. It’s embarrassing.

Like Devin, Bethanny believed she was under greater pressure in the urban school environment, especially as she’d been placed in one of the coveted urban internship slots. And with the highly regarded Christine as her supervisor, Bethanny felt more pressure still to perform efficiently, with few mistakes. Given the extent of the stressors and her personal level of anxiety, Bethanny felt particularly angry about what she perceived as
the university’s failure to provide adequate communication with, and support to, the urban interns. Bethanny felt that her only means of emotional support came from her friendship with Devin and her quarterly meetings with me:

None of us get to talk about our feelings throughout this process. We have absolutely no power and tons of responsibility. If it weren’t for Devin and meeting with you, I’d be completely alone. And I still feel very alone. I feel very disconnected from the university in terms of support.

On her final internship questionnaire, Bethanny rated the university internship meetings as being one of the least effective components of her training, adding that she felt that all the interns found the meetings “kinda sucky” but that the urban district interns “really needed more support due to the workload, the tension… everything. The meetings were a huge disappointment.”

**Experience of Hope.**

Of the three interns, Bethanny seemed least connected to any specific university, district or personal goals. While Amy had actively pursued a list of district goals and continued to work to accomplish them, and Devin had copies of these same district goals and used them to inform her training, Bethanny never alluded to using the district goal sheet and seemed confused when asked about it. Unlike her practicum experience – where specific caseloads and intervention expectations were listed with appropriate timelines for completion – Bethanny had no template for her internship training, and did not seek one. Her overall sense of internship expectations was “becoming a competent
school psychologist.” When asked what Christine’s goals for her were, Bethanny again seemed baffled, stating “she hasn’t vocalized them to me.”

In terms of personal goals, Bethanny was able to speak of a general desire to become knowledgeable about her field and emerge from training as a more confident individual. Following, her main concerns over the course of internship regarded addressing her anxieties over job performance, relating well with authority figures, and learning the particulars of assessment and intervention. In Bethanny’s view, it was a challenge to pursue her personal goals when she felt restricted from autonomous work; she often felt that she’d been “pegged as an anxious student” and would never be allowed “full independence like the other interns.” Because of this, she felt thwarted in building full personal and professional confidence – yet, she still desired more emotional support from both Christine and the university:

On the one hand, I think I need the independence of taking over my own building, but I think people think I can’t do it. And I’m an introvert. I spend a lot of time thinking about these issues and I think it makes it worse…I just feel very disconnected from everything in terms of support.

Bethanny’s relationship with Christine served as both a hope builder and hope hindrance. On the one hand, Bethanny spoke glowingly of Christine’s ability to problem solve, remain confident in crisis, and motivate teachers and parents to implement appropriate interventions – Christine was clearly a model for hopeful professional behavior. Yet, Bethanny also described Christine as an intensely driven and emotionally distant supervisor with high expectations that were rarely clear to Bethanny. Bethanny
often felt overwhelmed by the “toughness” of Christine’s approach and her continual lack of reinforcement for good work; she never completely understood what she was supposed to be doing better, or how she could improve. The negative, first quarter intern/supervisor meeting significantly contributed to her confusion of her skill level and performance, and Bethanny never felt completely comfortable speaking with Christine about her fears:

I’ve never really been able to tell Christine how I feel. I feel like she would definitely judge me and it would take away the confidence she does have in me. I mean, I can ask her questions and I think she does like me, but I’d have to be at my actual breaking point to have an actual conversation with her about how I really feel.

In her final interview, Bethanny was able to point to many of the positives of her relationship with Christine and discuss how Christine had served as a strong model for problem-solving skills and staff relationship building. She was also able to step back from some of her original negativity concerning her confidence levels, and speak of increased assertiveness in IAT meetings; it seemed that regular interaction with parents and staff had increased her confidence despite her perceived lack of autonomy:

I am finally becoming more confident in what I am doing. I think other people are starting to notice, too. They’re thinking that I actually know what I’m talking about even if I really don’t. I don’t know how much of this is having been trained by Christine, or just getting the hang of it, and maybe just because it’s the end of the year. My worry now is not doing my job, but finding a job!
Bethanny’s Adult Dispositional Hope Scale scores were lower than either Amy’s or Devin’s scores, suggesting her struggles with identifying specific professional and personal goals and her challenges with building autonomy and self-confidence. Bethanny’s total, overall hope score was a 22 out of a possible 32 – by Snyder’s interpretation, a score that suggests that an individual may “not approach things with a hopeful mindset” (Snyder, 2000). Bethanny’s pathways score totaled an 11 out of a possible 16; her agency or motivation score was the same, also totaling an 11 out of a possible 16. These scores suggest no significant difference in Bethanny’s motivation to complete her goals and her ability to find ways to complete them – both showed as weaker areas of behavior as Bethanny came to the completion of her internship training year. Bethanny’s scale results indicated that she continued to feel challenged to exhibit hopeful professional thinking. In her final internship questionnaire, Bethanny stated that while internship was a “positive experience for me overall and worth it,” she noted that the experience had “broken her down to do it.”

**Final Thoughts.**

Like all the interns, Bethanny felt considerable stress about finding a job following internship, and was willing to “take just about anything in order to pay the bills.” Ideally, Bethanny spoke of wanting to have some experiences in suburban districts, where she’d had no active training and wondered how working conditions and staff relationships might be different from the urban district:

I love working with urban kids but I just don’t know if I can deal with the intensity of the organizational structure. I mean, it’s hard to tell
if I don’t want a job in the central city district because of what happened
or because I just want to learn about suburban districts?

Along with the overall anxiety about just finding work, Bethanny felt very
confused about whether or not she was letting some of the more negative aspects of
internship – the crippling first quarter meeting between interns and supervisors, the lack
of emotional support and positive reinforcement -- color her desire to work in the central
city district. She described feeling very connected to working with urban children and
wanted to continue to learn about issues of diversity and poverty, but she also noted a
desire to distance herself from what she called “the negativity.” In her final
communication with me, Bethanny indicated that she’d accepted a part-time position with
the central city district. She wrote that she was “thrilled to take it on,” and felt “prepared
for anything,” mainly because she’d survived such a tough training experience.
Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore how a school psychology master’s level training program contributes to a student’s level of hope as he/she works through full-time internship training in the urban school environment. The catalyst for this project was the examiner’s interest in how the mental health of school psychology graduate students can be affected by their training and subsequently, how that mental health can affect their job performance – particularly in what is perceived as the more stressful environment of the central city school. A positive psychology framework, where hope is identified as a central component of resilience at all three levels of positive psychology theory, informed this study.

Chosen data collection and analysis procedures are not intended to be evaluative in nature – this is not a critique of one urban school psychology master’s preparation program. The data gathered is intended to contribute to a general model of school psychology training that can be applied in all internship placements – what training methods and approaches to field training placement might best promote hopeful thinking in students? By necessity with the boundaries of the case study, some voices will not be
heard from – specifically, those of involved university and district personnel. While the supplied case studies provide rich narratives of this internship experience, they must be analyzed within the context of the specific year of data collection (2009-2010) and with the clear understanding of the missing university and district perspective. Further, both personal external factors and internal personality characteristics may have contributed to participant narratives.

The following questions loosely framed the direction of inquiry from the outset of the study, influencing all streams of data included in the case studies:

1. What are the experiences of master’s level school psychology interns on internships in urban settings?
   (a) How are these interns prepared for work in urban educational settings? How do they evaluate its effectiveness in their current urban internship settings;
   (b) How do these interns perceive the urban school environment;
   (c) How has participants’ past work, school experiences, or training contributed to their responses – positive or negative -- to this environment;
   (d) How do the interns describe their experiences with clients, supervisors, school and university personnel and they complete their internship experiences?

2. How do these interns experience hope?
   (a) Do these interns feel “hopeful” upon the completion of their training as defined by Snyder’s Hope Theory (1991);
   (b) How do the interns describe their process of goal-setting with university and school supervisors;
(c) How did field supervisors serve as models of hopeful behavior? How did this hopeful behavior manifest itself?

These questions will be discussed individually on the following pages, with a discussion of emerging themes and presentation of thematic model to follow.

1. What are the experiences of master’s level school psychology interns on internships in urban settings?

How are these interns prepared for work in urban educational settings? How do they evaluate its effectiveness in their current urban internship setting?

The Ohio State master’s level school psychology training program is described as one that is urban in focus, requiring a series of classes and field experiences designed to prepare students to encounter a variety of urban issues – race, economic, class, geographical, and environmental – that may inform their experiences in urban school environments. A two-course sequence beginning in the first quarter of graduate study begins this process, which includes a first-year diversity course, a second year urban-themed course, first and second year field experiences, a second year, 300 clock hour urban practicum experience, and a final, 1500 hour year long internship experience in a central Ohio school district – three slots of which are reserved for a central Ohio urban school district.

Over the course of the interview and observation process, all three case study participants – Amy, Devin and Bethanny – used words such as “intensive” and “thorough” when describing this urban-centered training. All three further portrayed learning experiences that were “essential” to their understanding of the urban
environment. They found the training effective and necessary for their success. Regardless of individual background – all three having been educated in primarily white, suburban school environments – all three participants were able to provide specific cases within the urban school environment when they were able to utilize this training for the benefit of central district students, staff or supervisors – from an acknowledgement of the cultural bias in testing instruments and selection thereof, to an understanding of the counseling needs of urban youth, to a greater sense of personal empowerment which informed relationships during internship training.

Participants particularly highlighted continuous urban field experiences as essential to their understanding of the urban environment, describing these visits to central city venues as “becoming a part of (them)” and “taking the edge off” of some of the more negatives attributes of the environment. These experiences made participants feel “comfortable” in these environments, and they began to see them as “where (they) were trained to be.” Participants spoke glowingly of a first-quarter diversity course project that asked them to explore their own cultural history by speaking with family members and researching family cultural experience – a process that helped cement their own cultural identity in relation to that of others. Though urban training course experiences had the potential to be contentious for two of the three participants – and myself – all acknowledged that this tension had a place in the training process – this tension between those of cultural dominance and those of minority cultures would be present in the urban school and thus, training should address it. For the third participant, this tension became a part of her transformative personal empowerment, and helped her
give voice to a diverse cultural and economic history. All participants responded to the training with positivity, finding it appropriate, thorough, and necessary for their success in urban school environments.

**How do participants perceive the urban school environment following urban training?**

It is not surprising that given the suburban backgrounds of all three participants, all described a personal journey of initial hesitation about working in an urban school district. Both Amy and Devin approached the urban focus of the program with mixed feelings; it was not part of their initial attraction to Ohio State’s program. In contrast, Bethanny found the Ohio State program focus appealing because of her own struggles with personal cultural identity. As training progressed and their familiarity with urban environments grew, both Amy and Devin found themselves responding to what they described as a “competition” for the urban internship spots. Though they still acknowledged that the urban school environment would be challenging – Amy spoke often of the seemingly “endless caseload” and Devin was particularly candid about the potential negatives of the environment in comparison to the “Disney World” status of a wealthier suburban school district – they wanted to be chosen to train there. Bethanny described the urban school environment as fraught with struggles – practicum had taught her that she’d be dealing with “ineffective staffers and politics,” but she, too, wanted to be placed in one of the coveted urban slots. While admitting that the potential for paid tuition was part of the appeal, all three participants also described responding to a sense that the faculty held these positions as “rewards,” with only the best students placed in
them. They believed that being selected for these urban slots complimented their ability; they also understood that it came with “greater pressure for success.” Regardless of the greater intensity of the urban school internship experience – described by the participants as higher caseloads, more schools, difficult politics, emotionally challenging clients, and poor work environments – all three participants pursued the placement vigorously and were delighted with the result.

**How has participants’ past work, school experiences, or training contributed to their responses – positive or negative – to this environment?**

Devin and Bethanny shared more than a close friendship: they also shared a fairly typical graduate student profile as students who had entered graduate study directly from undergraduate school. In contrast, Amy had spent time after undergraduate school working in a related field where she regularly made contact with people with developmental disabilities and their families. Amy was the most professionally experienced of the three interns, and was also the oldest. She noted in her initial interview, that the “bureaucracy and politics” of her current urban placement didn’t faze her because her work with the county board of developmental disabilities had prepared her for some of the stressors of public service. In short, she felt she was “more aware of what (I’m) getting in to.” Neither Devin nor Bethanny had post-undergraduate professional experience, and neither had had extensive experience working with the public or working in urban environments. While their professional inexperience didn’t necessarily significantly affect their internship training, it may have affected the confidence with which they chose to set goals and work with supervisors; they simply
hadn’t done so before in the professional arena. When Bethanny addressed her climbing stress level during her second interview, she pointed out that her age might be contributing to her struggle, noting that the examiner was older, had had more experience, and thus, seemed to take things more “in stride.”

Midway through their first quarter of internship, all three interns were made aware of their supervisors’ negative view of their prior training and performance during an emotional meeting between all central school district supervisors and Ohio State interns. This meeting significantly challenged the self-perceptions of both Bethanny and Devin, and they struggled to overcome their shattered self-confidence over the course of the year. For Devin, the event colored her perception of the central city district, and she felt very reluctant to pursue employment there even though she felt a strong commitment to working with underprivileged children. Bethanny -- deeply tied to working in a diverse, urban school district -- also walked away from the meeting questioning whether she could work in what she now perceived as an antagonistic environment. Further, Bethanny felt significant anxiety as to whether or not she’d been appropriately trained to survive in such an environment as three district supervisors had made it clear to her that she was not, despite having prior experience there while on practicum. Of the three interns, only Amy walked away from the experience with personal confidence seemingly intact and the ability to distance herself from what she described as “just drama.” While reflecting on the meeting during interviews, Amy did not connect the negativity of the experience with the district as a whole; she did not verbalize any reluctance to pursue work there.
How do the interns describe their experiences with supervisors and university personnel as they complete their internship experiences?

As interviews progressed over the course of the internship year, it became apparent that in the minds of the study participants, the supervisor-intern relationship was central to the overall training experience. The general consensus among all Ohio State interns – masters and doctoral – is that the supervisor selection process is something of a crap shoot, and some interns are lucky and find themselves well matched both personally and professionally, and some are not so fortunate. Some enter their internship year well aware that their matched supervisor has a “history” of less desirable personality quirks and expectations; rumors easily pass from one cohort class to another and can affect the supervisory relationship from day one.

This was partially the case for one training relationship, both in terms of supervisor and intern. Bethanny entered into supervision feeling lucky that she’d been placed with a trainer who was so well regarded and experienced. Yet, she was also aware Christine had a history of intensity and high expectations. She also understood that Christine had been told that she was an anxious student, prone to self-doubt and low confidence. Bethanny continued to feel that these initial perceptions clouded her relationship with Christine, making it difficult for her to establish easy communication and autonomy. She felt, in essence, that Christine didn’t trust her with independence and thus began to feel she didn’t deserve it, entering into a negative cycle of low confidence, poor performance, and perpetual mistrust. This cycle contributed to her emotional reaction to the negative supervisor/intern meeting in the first quarter of training, and also
colored one on one evaluation meetings as the year progressed. Bethanny and Christine seemed unable to clarify shared internship training goals or determine an appropriate mix of autonomy and constructive feedback. This communication issue contributed to Bethanny’s anxieties over the course of internship.

Despite this, Bethanny respected Christine’s commitment to her job and motivation to resolve problems and connect with school staffers. Her personal descriptions of Christine were often positive – she respected Christine’s efficiency in employing intervention models, working with parents and teachers, and interpreting assessment materials. She understood that Christine had a driven way of doing things that contributed to her reputation as a highly effective school psychologist. Despite their communication issues, Christine still served as a training model for Bethanny, and Bethanny believed – despite the significant challenges she faced over the course of the year – that she’d “pick Christine as a supervisor again.”

While Amy did not enter her internship supervisory experience with particular enthusiasm – she hadn’t found his practicum training particularly robust or extensive – she did have a familiarity with his methods and had already established a good relationship with him. She felt comfortable expressing herself with Aaron and seemed fearless about expressing her personal and professional internship goals, even when – on occasion – he discouraged her from doing so. Perhaps due to her prior working relationship with him, Amy was comfortable enough to see herself more as part of a team with Aaron than as an intern; she had no reservations about “negotiating” with him about working with other supervisors, in other buildings, or on cases or goals unrelated to what
Aaron saw as the “practicalities” of the job. Together, they established a mix of autonomy and appropriate supervisory feedback that worked for both of them. Amy also saw Aaron as a mentor for positive problem solving within the schools. She was impressed by his ability to pilot an intervention identification program for at-risk kids that at once contributed to his workload, but also helped solve some of the paperwork issues between school psychologists and teachers. She also spoke enthusiastically of his commitment to getting along with teachers and staffers, often giving up his lunch hours to sit in the teacher lounge discussing cases and sharing intervention ideas. Over the course of the year, Amy’s positive relationship with Aaron – and continued strong communication – at once served as a model for training, and protected her from some of the more negative training experiences.

Of the three interns, Devin considered herself the least fortunate in supervisory placement because she’d been “blessed” with not one supervisor, but two, and an overwhelming seven school placements in which to serve her training year. Immediately, Devin was concerned about meeting the expectations of two supervisors, and her fears were warranted: she was unable to personally or professionally connect with Margeaux who seemed disinterested and disconnected from Devin’s training; she was often critical of Devin’s performance, providing little constructive feedback. By mid-year, Devin had weathered the added stressor of having Margeaux removed as her supervisor and continuing the year with only one supervisor – Sam – with whom she felt she had a positive relationship. Devin described Sam as a strong model for effective work habits and problem solving skills, detailing how Sam was able to think through issues and
resolve conflicts that other school psychologists seemed baffled by. She further appreciated Sam’s commitment to staff collegiality and attention to assertive, not aggressive communication with teachers. Her one regret over the supervisory relationship was that she had not achieved a strong enough level of communication with Sam by the fall meeting between supervisor and interns to ward off her extremely negative, emotional reaction to the event. Overall, however, Devin described Sam as a “great model” for her future school psychology work.

All three study participants felt that their connection to the university during the internship process was weak, and had few positive things to say regarding university support. Both Devin and Bethanny had expected a higher level of faculty interest in their urban experiences of internship, and seemed disillusioned by the challenging relationship between university and district, which they termed “political.” Bethanny, in particular, felt that given the perception of the urban district as a more stressful one, faculty should have provided more emotional support to interns or at the very least, used required monthly internship meetings as a forum to explore some of the issues interns might be facing. All three interns found these meetings to be lacking in substance, and found themselves wondering as to the purpose of bringing the interns together when they felt they were learning little and receiving little support. Participants further expressed confusion concerning the university’s role in their quarterly evaluation. While they were aware that faculty met with supervisors to discuss their progress, they had no specific goals from the university to achieve or feedback to discuss; they had no understanding of how these meetings related to their grades. As Amy stated in her final interview,
connections with the university just became about “filling out the right paperwork for licensure.” To be fair, only Amy pursued any specific goals from the university and none of the participants discussed the infamous negative meeting with Dr. C. The university seemed unaware of the event.

2. How do these interns experience and describe hope?

Do these interns feel “hopeful” upon the completion of their training as defined by Snyder’s Hope Theory (1991)?

Snyder’s cognitive, motivational model of hope (1991) is defined as an empirical formula for goal completion that includes the identification of goals, an assessment of how to achieve those goals (pathways thought) and the motivation (agency) to complete them. Snyder’s model is supported by a series of successful measurement instruments – including the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale given in this study – and a collection of cognitive-based interventions shown to increase hope in a variety of populations (McDermott & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 2000). Snyder’s conception of hope has been validated as a significant component of academic and sport achievement, as well as social and employment success (Curry et al., 1997; Luthans, 2002; Onwuegbuzie, 1999; Snyder, 2000).

At the completion of their internship training, the three intern participants showed a diversity in their hope levels, both in qualitative-based interviews, observations, and quantitative-based Adult Dispositional Hope Scale results. The exceedingly goal-directed Amy emerged as the most “hopeful” participant as defined by Snyder’s model, actively seeking to identify and pursue personal and professional goals from day one. Amy
described herself as a “goal-directed person” and verbalized specific plans for reaching goals – identifying how she could work with her supervisor and other school psychologists in the district to achieve a series of clear, detailed goals. Amy also saw herself as someone willing to “work hard” to accomplish her set goals. She seemed unfazed by what other interns saw as emotionally draining events over the course of internship, and committed herself to task completion in the face of challenging situations. Amy personally committed to identifying and completing goals – with or without supervisory or university support. Not surprisingly, at the end of her training year Amy qualitatively presented as the most hopeful participant, and her Adult Dispositional Hope Scale results mirror this with an overall “highly hopeful” score.

Both Devin and Bethanny struggled to maintain high hope levels over the course of internship. From the beginning, Devin expressed less of a commitment to clear, established goals – she did not seek written expectations from either the university or school district, and seemed relatively unconcerned about their absence. Yet, qualitative data showed that Devin expressed a high level of dedication to her personal goal of building professionalism over her training year and established how she intended to do so – by “paying attention, asking questions, accepting feedback…and working with faculty and supervisors.” Though Devin appeared eager to build toward this goal, the first quarter, contentious meeting between interns and supervisors shattered much of her initial motivation, and her challenging relationship with Margeaux did little to heal this rift. Devin stated that she found these first quarter events significantly “demoralizing” and had trouble regaining her footing as the year progressed. Yet, her solid relationship with
her other supervisor, Sam, and emerging independence helped to build her hope levels to a moderate range by the end of the training year; her Adult Dispositional Hope Scale results also placed her in this middle range.

Like Devin, Bethanny did not actively seek out either university or district goals and did not seem particularly concerned that she had none. During qualitative data collection, she described the internship training process as a “practical” one in scope, and was unable to identify any strong, clear personal goals other than a general wish to become a competent and “more confident” school psychologist; she did not describe how she intended to achieve these general goals. In her initial interview, Bethanny immediately vocalized anxieties about her internship performance and expressed concerns about how others might perceive her. She often referred to her supervisor’s reputation as a driven trainer with high expectations, and indicated that she was worried she could not meet them. As internship progressed, Bethanny had difficulty recovering from stressors – the negative meeting between supervisors and interns, a challenging relationship with her supervisor, a lack of support from supervisor and university – and she felt unable to vocalize her concerns with authority figures. Finally, a growing sense of independence seemed to free Bethanny from some of her anxieties. As she was given greater autonomy to problem-solve in her school, she found herself building a stronger confidence, which emerged in her final interview. Yet, her hope scale scores still detailed a lower sense of hope at the completion of internship. Of the three interns, she emerged as having the lowest “hopefulness” as framed by both qualitative and quantitative data collection processes.
How do interns describe the process of goal-setting with university and school supervisors?

The concept of internship goals or “expectations” tended to baffle all three study participants as none were provided by either university or central city district. Both Devin and Bethanny had an understanding that the internship process was to be a “practical” one in scope, and thus specific, written goals were not required. As a more goal-driven person, Amy actively sought written expectations from the university and when none were provided, found an older list of goals used by district interns in the past. This list then informed her training, regardless of her supervisor’s lack of regard for them. None of the interns were able to verbalize their supervisors’ expectations for them, and none had an understanding of how goals might be linked to their quarterly evaluation sheets or final quarter grades. Following the stressful, first-quarter meeting between interns and supervisors, all three participants noted that it was difficult to be judged as performing poorly when they had little understanding from the university or district as to what was expected of them. And, the meeting did nothing to clarify those expectations for an improvement in performance.

Did field supervisors serve as models of hopeful behavior? How did this hopeful behavior manifest itself?

Despite varying levels of individual supervisor support and adequate communication, all three interns described their supervisors in terms of relatively effective “hopeful” behavior modeling. Snyder et al. (2003) posits that the modeling of hopeful behavior by authority figures – strong goal identification, problem-solving skills,
and motivation – can have a significant affect on the hope levels of students and workers, to the point of encouraging a healthier, more resilient school and work environment.

Here, all three interns were able to describe specific instances when supervisors identified issues requiring resolution, clarified steps towards resolution, and eventually achieved their goals. In particular, Amy spoke highly of Aaron’s commitment to creating an entirely new system of identifying at-risk children for assessment, and Bethanny was in awe of what she described as Christine’s continual ability to resolve issues with teachers and parents and motivation to take on new challenges. Devin, too, described her supervisor, Sam, in “highly hopeful” terms, noting that he was able to break down seemingly unmanageable problems into smaller, more realistic goals they could achieve. All three participants highlighted their supervisor’s ability to engage in these hopeful actions under the more stressful conditions of the urban school environment; all three indicated they were inspired by this behavior.

**Emerging Themes**

In Chapter 4, three case studies were presented comprised of the reflective experiences of three master’s level interns as they completed their internship training year in an urban district in central Ohio. The resulting analysis and model for resiliency training for master’s level school psychologists is built by identifying, through coding, solo case themes that then appear across cases. These themes develop a *pattern* of themes that then comprise a *model* for this hope training, and potentially, for contribution to the positive school environment as described in positive school psychology literature (Clonan, et al., 2004; Miller & Sawka-Miller, 2007). Theme coding control was
maintained according to the code book model promoted by Glesne (2006), which allows major concepts to “grow” and “emerge” into prominent themes as data saturation reaches completion.

Following data collection, the study data analysis process showed the emergence of six central themes regarding the experiences of three master’s level school psychology students on internship in urban school settings. These main themes will be briefly discussed in the following pages, with a discussion model for hopeful urban school to psychology training to follow. The subsequent chart illustrates the central themes in order of frequency:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Power of Supervisory Relationship (PSR)</th>
<th>II. Training For Familiarity (TFF)</th>
<th>III. Training Identified Goals (TIG)</th>
<th>IV. University/Supervisor Feedback (USF)</th>
<th>V. University/District Communication (UDC)</th>
<th>VI. Ongoing University Support (OUS)</th>
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**Power of Supervisory Relationship (PSR).**

One theme emerged as the most prevalent in interviews and observations: the powerful influence held by supervisors over the confidence levels, independence and performance of study participants, particularly those with limited professional experience. Recent employment related literature has highlighted the essential quality of
the supervisor-supervisee relationship in determining positive employee experience and an overall positive workplace (Luthans, 2002; Snyder & Feldman, 2000). Here, the internship training milieu provides no exception: study participants made unequivocal statements concerning the influence of each supervisor’s level of motivation, support, and training style over the intern’s overall sense of well-being and accomplishment. Only Amy – older, and with greater professional experience – seemed less influenced by her day-to-day experiences with her supervisor Aaron. Yet, she still came to regard the overall relationship with Aaron – one of teamwork and strong communication – as essential to her continued sense of a positive training experience.

Training for Familiarity (TFF).

When describing the urban-focused university training, interns frequently expressed satisfaction with both coursework and field experiences, detailing how the intensity of the training assisted them in understanding and functioning in the urban school environment. The necessity of this knowledge-building training was a frequent theme; participants noted that they felt their comfort with the urban school environment was a direct result of these training experiences. There was a general sense that interns had been prepared for success in the urban school environment and thus, they could be successful there.

Training Identified Goals (TIG).

During the majority of interviews and observational opportunities, the subject of internship training expectations or goals became a familiar, pressing theme. Before the question of goals was even broached with study participants, all three had expressed
concern about the lack of goals, either by indicating that they were in the process of trying to identify them, or showing confusion and concern about the process of doing so. Participants also frequently expressed frustration regarding their inability to link expectations with quarterly supervisory and university evaluations and grades. Study participants also highlighted the dearth of communication between district and university regarding expectations, and how this issue came to create significant stressors for the interns as evidenced by such events as the negative first quarter meeting between supervisors and interns.

**University/Supervisor Feedback (USF).**

Just as the lack of specific training goals became a central theme for study participants, variations in the extent and quality of university and supervisory feedback also appeared as a continual subject for concern. The university required Intern Competencies/Evaluation packet served as a quarterly marker for both interns and supervisors, and participants noted that their experiences rating their skills and discussing results with supervisors tended to be positive. Yet, interns expressed confusion regarding how the packet related to internship goals and grades, and vocalized desires to hear from faculty concerning their performance. In general, interns were not privy to faculty-supervisor discussions regarding participant performance, and they also stated they received no feedback from faculty regarding these discussions. Comments from participants strongly indicated that this lack of feedback created – in part – significant stressors over the course of internship, particularly after the negative first quarter meeting between all interns and supervisors. Though participants spoke extensively about faculty
feedback, not one actively pursued feedback with faculty; faculty was unaware of this concern.

**University/District Communication (UDC).**

During interviews, study participants regularly expressed confusion over the quality and extent of university/district communication and verbalized fears that the university and district did not share similar training goals or shared performance critiques. There was an understanding that in general, regular feedback would be determined by the interns’ direct supervisors: clearly the university was not involved on a daily basis with interns’ activities. Yet, when significant events occurred – such as the emotionally charged first quarter meeting between interns and supervisors – all three interns strongly indicated that the university should both be informed of these events, and active participants in any event processes. It seems that the interns had some expectation that faculty should engage in certain responsibilities to address these issues, but no participant addressed it with Dr. C in any context. All three study participants expressed feelings of frustration concerning what they perceived to be the “politics” and “lack of communication” between district and university; a general sense that both entities were “not on the same page” prevailed, and participants felt that these communication issues had been going on for years. Yet again, no participant addressed these concerns with faculty.

**Ongoing University Support (OUI).**

Study participants – particularly Devin and Bethanny – noted that while they were training to be professionals and working in a professional environment, they were still
students and required university support. Both NASP and Ohio State’s school psychology program acknowledge the dual persona of the intern during internship training year – as both professional and student – and address it through required monthly university intern meetings. These meetings are designed to increase the knowledge base of the intern – through presentations on current school psychology topics – and also provide a forum to discuss the significant events of internship, such as supervisor relations, client issues, specific case studies, etc.

All study participants responded with overwhelming negativity to questions concerning monthly university internship meetings, describing these meetings as “pointless” and “a waste of time.” Study interns indicated that they learned little to augment their skills in school psychology – the offered presentations on crisis intervention and assessment with ELL populations were not described as informative – and they were confused as to how they should link these presentations to what they were learning within the district. Participants noted that on occasion, meetings would offer fruitful discussion forums concerning cases or supervisory issues, but overall, there were limited opportunities to discuss such topics. Overall, study interns stated that they wanted more occasions to talk about “what was actually happening on internship” and to brainstorm solutions to problems with fellow cohort members and faculty. They also stated that they desired a greater understanding of university expectations regarding their performance and opportunities for university feedback during these sessions.

A Proposed Model for Hopeful School Psychology Training for the School Environment
Recent school psychology research literature proposes a paradigm shift away from the traditional model of school psychology services – focused primarily on assessment – to one of a more universal and complete manner of care (Clonan et al., 2004; Nastasi, 2000; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). This new mode of service delivery is described as one where intervention and consultation – with staff, parent, and student – become the centerpiece of the school psychologist’s role within the school environment. Further, services move from those focused primarily on referred individuals to those addressing the ecology of the entire school – working to create a more positive school environment for all students (Nastasi, 2000).

The school environment is an educational environment, but also a workplace. It is argued in employment research literature that the positive workplace is one in which positive feelings are fostered in the workers themselves; workplace functioning increases by the mere fact that employees are happier and more resilient, and thus, can inspire optimism and productivity in others (Fredrickson, 2002; Luthans, 2002). Snyder and Feldman (2000) argue that hope as a construct is central to the development of this positive institution, noting that Snyder’s Hope Theory (1991) “could be applied to help build environments where people can work together to meet shared goals…there is enormous potential in working together in the spirit of hope” (p.268). Snyder et al. (2003) applies this concept to the role of the school psychologist in the school, noting that “school psychologists contribute greatly in helping students, teachers, and schools in general to becoming more hopeful” (p.122).
It is arguable that staff members in urban school districts require greater training for resiliency in order to increase staff retention and avoid burnout; urban school personnel report stress levels at significantly higher levels than workers in suburban and rural districts (Haberman & Rickards, 1990; O’Donnell, Lambert & McCarthy, 2008; Patterson et al., 2004). Urban-based educational training programs – such as that of The Ohio State University’s School Psychology graduate program – are distinctive in their potential to address the resilience of graduates through pre-graduation training and support, yet there is little research literature on the effectiveness of these training programs in building student resiliency. Within the framework of the positive school, this study posits that the building of hope is part of this resilience; training programs that aid in the development of hope can contribute to graduates’ commitment to all school environments, stronger and more positive relationships with at-risk youth, the modeling of hope for other staff members, and increases in productivity (Snyder & Feldman, 2000). Based on study data, the emergence of themes, and current research on urban educational training, the following model for hopeful school psychology internship training for school environments is proposed:

**Preinternship training should offer significant coursework on the nature of the urban school environment and opportunities for numerous exposures to this environment.**

A review of urban educational training literature suggests that exposure to the urban school environment is a common theme: researchers generally agree that it is essential to build student knowledge base concerning cultural sensitivity, social
inequalities, and histories of cultural division (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Melnick & Zeichner, 1997; Sleeter, 2001). Researchers also highlight regular exposure to the urban environment as yet another fundamental part of urban school training (Burns, Grande, & Marble, 2008).

Thematic results from this study mirror these tenets: study participants found their sequential urban coursework with regular lectures, discussions, readings, and projects on diversity and socioeconomic issues vital to their understanding of the urban school environment. Participants further reported that required urban field exposures made the urban environment “familiar” to them and thus, less challenging and stressful as they moved into their internship training year. Ohio State’s second-year practicum experience in a central city district – required of all masters-level students – literally immerses students in the urban school district for over three hundred clock hours. Students emerge from the experience with a more complete understanding of the challenges of this milieu; this familiarity builds their ability to identify goals, problem-solve, and retain motivation in a potentially more stressful environment.

Training programs, districts and interns must develop clear, specific, and shared goals for the internship experience.

According to Snyder’s Hope Theory (1991), an individual’s development of higher levels of hope is dependent on first, the identification of “clear, workable goals” (Snyder, 2000, p.138). In the institutional environment – such as the urban school milieu -- these specific goals are most powerful when they are collective in nature – that is, shared between institution and individual, where institution leadership encourages
workers to share in the process of naming these expectations (Snyder & Feldman, 2000). In the context of this study, it is also essential that students take ownership of the goal identification process, and become active participants in working with faculty and district to identify goals. This process promotes the investment of the worker in the goals; they literally become both institutional and personal expectations.

It is true that the internship training process is somewhat dependent on what is practical in the real life atmosphere of the urban school placement, but students must begin this process with a goal roadmap for success. Without any indicators for expectation, students literally do not engage in directed activity, and are less apt to problem solve or develop motivation; “without goals, there would be no reason to perceive ways or to experience the will to apply effort” (McDermott & Snyder, 2000, p.126). Snyder et al. (2003) comment that the nature of these goals can range from easier, more workable ones (such as designing a single behavioral intervention) to more complex and difficult ones (such as planning a series of interventions at the top two tiers of Response to Intervention service); research suggests that as individuals continue to build hope over the course of training, goals should become more challenging in nature (Snyder et al., 2003). It is important to note that the most hope-building goals are those with which individuals feel a personal commitment (Lopez et al., 2000); training programs should work with students to develop both simple and challenging goals for internship.

This study’s thematic results suggest that students were confused about the nature of internship goals, and thus, struggled to problem solve and maintain motivation during
more stressful times. The failure to create shared goals between university, district, and student may have significantly contributed to the first quarter negative meeting between interns and supervisors. If expectations had been clear from the beginning, with an investment from all three parties, students would have maintain greater levels of resiliency through the process. Qualitative and quantitative data results both suggest the one intern who actively pursued clear goals from the district was able to preserve a higher level of hope throughout internship.

Training programs must provide regular, quarterly feedback regarding intern’s performance tied to these identified goals.

Snyder (2000) posits that the most successful pathways toward goal completion includes regular feedback or “dialogues” with others as steps to goal completion occur (p.139). These conversations can happen under a variety of individual/hope builder conditions – between client and therapist, employer and employee, intern and supervisor, or intern and university faculty member. Part of the intern training experience is inevitably evaluation. Ohio State’s school psychology program addresses this with official evaluations that take place at the end of each quarter, three times over the internship experience. Supervisors are given the university’s Intern Competencies/Evaluation packet and asked to fill it out prior to a meeting with the intern, and another meeting with faculty to discuss results.

In a general sense, study results suggest that this process was relatively successful. Participants felt that supervisors worked well with the Intern Competencies/Evaluation packet, and found these feedback sessions valuable. Yet, they
were confused as to how the competency sections related to internship goals; they’d had no initial explanation of the packet, or how it related to university expectations for their performance. They expressed no understanding of how it might relate to any personal goals they might have for the experience. Further, interns reported they had no understanding of how their evaluations related to their quarterly grades, or how the university viewed their performance. Overall, interns saw no link between goals and feedback, and thus, could not engage in any hope building “dialogues” with anyone regarding the process of completion. In contrast, my own evaluation experience included the addition of faculty dialogue which strengthened that process for me and helped clarify expectations. University training programs must regularly communicate with interns regarding supervisor evaluations, university interpretation of these evaluations, and how these evaluations relate to goal achievement and grades (if assigned).

**Chosen urban school supervisors must have a successful record of serving as a mentor or “coach” for such hopeful behavior.**

When researching the expansion of Hope Theory to college-level students, Snyder et al. (2003) discovered that hopeful thought patterns – those of identifying goals, problem solving, and remaining motivated to complete goals – can be increased when students have access to “caring coaches,” or mentors who embody these resilient thought patterns. Within the data results of this study, it is clear that the supervisory/intern relationship has the greatest power over an intern’s ability to remain positive over the course of the internship experience; study results indicate that supervisors who showed significantly “hopeful” behavior by identifying expectations, remaining committed to
working toward them, and maintaining a level of collegiality with staff and parents had a strong, positive influence over study participants **even as other aspects of their supervision were deemed unsuccessful by participants.**

Outside the personal boundaries of the intern/supervisor relationship, school psychologists who embody hopeful behavior can have a significant effect on the positive school, and thus, can continue to influence supervisees to adopt similar patterns of behavior (Snyder et al., 2003). Miller et al. (2008) posit that a school psychologist’s personal attitude within the school environment can serve as a model for staff members, parents and youth; research by Akin-Little, Little, and Delligatti (2004) further indicates that school psychologists model hopeful and optimistic behaviors to help teachers promote such in the classroom environment. McDermott and Snyder (2000) note “adults who have high hope transmit hopeful thinking” (p.73). Urban internship supervisors with a record of strong hopeful behavior are significantly more likely to transmit these positive behaviors to interns during training, and thus, may contribute to an intern’s ability to transmit hopeful behavior in a future school or work setting.

**Continued university contact with interns should provide regular opportunities for the discussion of goals, strategies for problem solving and coping skill development.**

What little, current urban education research exists suggests that successful urban field placements require significant programmatic support and opportunities for student reflection (Bernshausen & Cunningham, 2001; Foote, 2005). Bernshausen and Cunningham (2001) highlight resiliency preparation as central to the achievement of education students in urban school settings; Freedman and Appleman (2008) note that the
success of University of California, Berkeley’s MUSE program is based on a significant commitment of faculty to the emotional support, opportunities for reflection, and collegiality of students as they remain in the urban training program. Participants in the current study specifically noted the lack of opportunities to connect with faculty for these activities, particularly during required monthly internship meetings.

Hope theory practice research suggests that regular opportunities for the sharing of problem-solving skills and dialogues concerning goal completion can serve as a catalyst for the building of hope (Lopez et al., 2000). Urban training programs should allow scheduled time for the sharing of problem solving narratives, such as how individual students may be addressing specific goals, planning steps to achieve them, and managing stress or challenges to goal completion. These “dialogues” can become motivational in nature, as they have the potential to inspire other individuals toward goal achievement (McDermott & Hastings, 2000). Snyder et al. (2003) comments that pathways training (or problem solving) should include the process of helping students to break larger goals into smaller, more workable goals, thus building smaller success into larger ones; this process can be built into group projects, and can help students build even greater pathways thinking by generating solutions with one another in active brainstorming sessions, “searching productively for solutions that may work” (p.130). These sessions have the potential to inherently build intern confidence and motivation, as it becomes less a “me” problem and more of a “we” one, helping students to derive emotional support from one another rather than depending on faculty for such support (p.129).
The leaders of urban training programs may also wish to commit to the sharing of hope “narratives” during programmatic training sessions – stories that illustrate the identification of workable goals, the steps necessary to complete them, and suggestions for maintaining motivation throughout (through positive self-talk, opportunities to dialogue with others, or through appropriate self-care) (McDermott & Snyder, 2000; Lopez et al., 2000). Hope theory research suggests that individuals respond with increased hopeful thinking and behaviors when teachers and other mentors share their own experiences with hope building activities (Cheavens et al., 2006; Snyder et al., 2003). Training sessions may also benefit from incorporating outside speakers with successful, hope building narratives (such as professional school psychologists who have built intervention programs or solved significant district challenges). With a dedication to the building of student resiliency through hope-based activities, training programs have an opportunity to provide the necessary support that urban education research suggests is necessary for urban field placements; all students – regardless of geographical placement – can benefit from such resiliency-building training.

Limitations

This study provides a model for urban school psychology training based on the collective case study data of three intern participants during their internship study year in an urban school district. Participant case study data was supplemented with epoche data provided by the examiner. Within qualitative case study models, this stands as a complete data collection process, with the addition of quantitative scale data. Yet, the perceptions of participant urban school supervisors, university personnel, school principals, staff, or
other faculty may have served to provide additional and/or complementary information not found in this study.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Researchers considering future studies concerning resiliency training for education professionals in urban-based school training programs may wish to add to this data comparatively by compiling case study material on hope experiences in suburban and rural school districts as well. For example, case studies could be collected on an entire intern class, not just those placed in urban school settings to examine how urban-based training programs build for resiliency in *all* types of districts rather than just the urban. Researchers may also wish to strengthen the narrative portions of the data analysis with the addition of narrative perspectives from faculty and/or district personnel. Other research avenues could include an expansion of the quantitative data collection portion of the study: the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale could be given longitudinally over the course of an entire internship year, or expanded over the course of several years of internship in order to study how an urban based education training program prepares for resiliency over several years of training rather than a single year. Broader based urban education training studies may examine other aspects of the positive psychology framework such as optimism or self-esteem, and how the encouragement of such traits may effect the success of students within urban school environments.

**Final Thoughts**

This study represents the perceptions of three Ohio State University master’s level school psychology graduate students while serving their internship training year in an
urban school district. The researcher conducted the study in order that the voices of these participants could be heard through the conduit of the qualitative case study narrative; collected quantitative data serves as a supplement to this narrative sharing of experience. Collected data intends to build a model for hope training in urban based education programs as these programs are uniquely positioned to address the overall resiliency of graduates and thus, affect graduates’ sense of commitment to these environments, relationships with urban school staff, and connections to vulnerable students.
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Snyder, C. R. et al. (1991). The will and ways: Development and validation of


Appendices
Appendix A: Information for Participants Prior to Consent

I would like you help. For my dissertation study, I hope to evaluate the hope states of Ohio State School Psychology Internship students as they work full-time in the so-called “hopeless” environments of the urban, central city school using a mixed method approach of Snyder’s Hope Scale and ethnographic case study method. I posit that graduate training programs that encourage hope in practitioners training for urban school environments are better able to prepare workers to avoid burnout and contribute to a positive school institution. Brief research questions would include: is the Ohio State graduate training program helping students engage in goal-directed, hopeful behavior in the urban school environment? Do these students feel “hopeful” upon the completion of their training? Do they feel better able to address the complexities of the urban school and contribute to a positive school environment? During my investigation, you will be asked to participate in three interviews and take a brief survey. Your answers will remain confidential at all times; your names will not be used. If at any time you wish to stop participating in the study, you are welcome to do so.

Date:____________________________________

Signed:____________________________ (Participant)

Signed:____________________________ (Principal Investigator)
Appendix B: Initial Internship Questionnaire

Name:
DOB:

Schools and levels where placed (is it elementary? High school?):

Expected caseload (rough estimate):

Supervisor, and their educational level (MA, ED.S, PhD.?)
Where did you grow up?

*Where did you attend the bulk of your initial schooling? Was it a rural, suburban or urban district?*

*Growing up, what experiences – if any – did you have with urban environments? What do you remember about those experiences?*

*While in school, did you have any experiences with the special education population? Did you have any learning problems or disabilities yourself?*

*Did you have any immediate family members with learning problems or disabilities?*
Why did you decide to attend Ohio State’s School Psychology Program? Did its urban focus have any bearing on your decision?

What feelings did you experience when you were told you were chosen for a CPS internship slot?

Do you feel prepared to work in an urban school environment? How did your university training help you prepare? Or not?

What are your personal goals for internship? How do you intend to achieve them? Does anything stand in your way?
Appendix C: Adult Dispositional Hope Scale

Directions: Read each item carefully. Using the scale shown below, please select the number that best describes YOU and put that number in the blank provided.

1 = Definitely False   2 = Mostly False   3 = Mostly True   4 = Definitely True

1. I can think of many ways to get out of a jam.
2. I energetically pursue my goals.
3. I feel tired most of the time.
4. There are lots of ways around any problem.
5. I am easily downed in an argument.
6. I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me.
7. I worry about my health.
8. Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.
9. My past experiences have prepared me well for my future.
10. I've been pretty successful in life.
11. I usually find myself worrying about something.
12. I meet the goals that I set for myself.

Taken from C. R. Snyder, C. Harris, J. R. Anderson, S. A. Holleran, L. M. Irving, S. T. Sigmon, L. Yoshinobu, J. Gibb, C. Langelle, & P. Harney. (1991). The will and the ways: Development and validation of an individual differences measure of hope. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60, 570-585. The scale can be used for research or clinical purposes without contacting the authors. If you would like further information about the Hope Scale or hope theory, contact Kevin Rand (klrand@iupui.edu).
Appendix D: Final Internship Questionnaire

Name:

Please choose from the following numbers for each question: 1 (describes me), 2 (describes me some), 3 (describes me a little), 4 (doesn’t really describe me) and 5 (doesn’t describe me at all). Type the number chosen under each question.

1. I chose to attend the Ohio State School Psychology program due to its urban focus.

2. The university internship goals were very clear to me. I knew what was expected of me from the beginning.

3. I felt motivated to complete my personal goals for internship.

4. I felt supported by the university throughout internship.

5. I felt well trained and prepared for an urban internship experience.

6. Internship was a positive experience for me.

7. My internship supervisor knew how to overcome obstacles with staff, teachers and/or parents.

8. I felt my internship supervisor served as a model to me for overcoming problems in the school setting. They were able to think of ways to solve problems and achieve goals.

9. I will be glad when internship is over.

10. The school district’s internship goals for me were very clear to me.
11. There was good communication between the university and the district regarding internship expectations and progress.

12. I can see myself modeling my school psychology behavior on that of my supervisor.

13. My supervisor maintained a positive attitude throughout internship.

14. I would like to have a job in CPS.

15. I had my own, clear goals for internship.

16. Monthly internship meetings with the university were very important to me. I learned a lot from them.
## Appendix E: Intern Competencies/Evaluation

Please rate the intern’s progress towards competency on the skills listed below according to the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Little/No Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Data-based Decision Making and Accountability

**Assessment Skills**

1. Establishes Rapport
2. Selects Appropriate Assessment Measures
3. Demonstrates Competency in Administering Cognitive Assessments
4. Demonstrates Competency in Completing Behavioral Assessments
5. Demonstrates Competency In Administering Curriculum Based Measurements
6. Demonstrates Assessment as a Process of Testing, Observing, and Interviewing to Collect Data for Purpose of Making Decisions about Students
7. Scores and Interprets Accurately
8. Writes Multifactored Evaluation Well
9. Verbally Communicates Findings Well
10. Understands Theoretical Constructs to Assessment Practices
11. Understands Psychometric Properties
12. Understands Legal and Ethical Practices associated with Assessment
Case Conceptualization Skills

1. Uses an Ecological/Problem-Solving Model
2. Conceptualizes Cases Comprehensively
3. Bases Conceptualization on Data
4. Considers Developmental Issues
5. Demonstrates Accurate Diagnostic Assessment
6. Connects to Intervention

Supervisor/Supervisee Initials:

Use of Scientist-Practitioner/Problem-Solving Model

1. Uses Data-Based Decisions Making on all activities concerning cases
2. Knows when and how to use empirically validated behavioral intervention strategies
3. Knows when and how to use empirically validated academic interventions strategies
4. Suggests and applies intervention monitoring methods
5. Understands the importance of and demonstrates competency in assessing treatment integrity

Supervisor/Supervisee Initials:

Accountability

1. Able to identify environmental factors that affect student competence and/or academic progress
2. Demonstrates how environmental factors and student characteristics interact to affect behavioral and academic outcomes
3. Competent in responding to requests by school administrators to help in assessment practices designed to meet general public accountability responsibilities.

4. Is familiar with federal, state and local accountability standards and procedures (proficiency testing, benchmarking, etc.)

**Supervisor/Supervisee Initials:**

**Interpersonal Communication, Collaboration, and Consultation**

**Interpersonal Skills**

1. Interacts with other professionals respectfully

2. Works well on a team

3. Communicates well with other professionals

4. Provides effective inservice

5. Deals well with ambiguity

6. Is patient in difficult situations

7. Listens effectively

**Supervisor/Supervisee Initials:**

**Collaboration**

1. Collaborates well with other professionals

2. Demonstrates good problem solving skills

3. Understands importance of collaboration

4. Able to present information to diverse audiences

**Supervisor/Supervisee Initials:**

**Consultation**
1. Applies major theories/models to consultation practice
2. Meets consultee needs
3. Exhibits goal directed/On-task behavior during session
4. Communicates clearly
5. Considers consultee perspective
6. Follows problem-solving steps
7. Establishes and maintains a collaborative relationship
8. Conveys credibility
9. Listens and values consultee input

**Supervisor/Supervisee Initials:**

_Professionalism_

1. Comes prepared to meetings
2. Appears confident when working with clients
3. Is open to feedback
4. Demonstrates use of feedback
5. Seeks supervision when needed
6. Takes ownership of responsibilities
7. Shows investment in learning
8. Functions autonomously
9. Takes initiative
10. Works well under pressure
11. Maintains professional boundaries
12. Manages conflict professionally
13. Does not allow personal issues to affect work
14. Knows when to step back from a problem
15. Uses appropriate problem-solving skills
16. Follows procedures/policies
17. Works effectively within the system

**Supervisor/Supervisee Initials:**

**Effective instruction and Development of Cognitive/Academic Skills**

1. Has knowledge of, assesses and intervenes on ecological instructional variables that contribute to cognitive skill
2. Demonstrates an understanding of instructional methodologies for classroom teaching such as class-wide peer tutoring and cooperative learning
3. Works with other professionals and faculty to improve instructional process
4. Works directly and indirectly to facilitate student achievement as well as the development of attention, problem-solving, and study skills
5. Assists teachers and staff with keeping abreast of important research on instruction

**Supervisor/Supervisee Initials:**

**Socialization and Development of Life Competencies**

**Individual Counseling Skills**

1. Counseling approach is derived from theory/models
2. Interacts in age-appropriate ways
3. Communicates clearly
4. Manages client behavior
5. Maintains appropriate boundaries
6. Develops written plan describing counseling techniques and goals
7. Documents progress of counseling sessions

*Group Counseling Skills*

1. Counseling approach derived from theories/models
2. Interacts in age-appropriate ways
3. Communicates clearly
4. Manages client behavior
5. Balances attention to each client
6. Maintains appropriate boundaries
7. Develops written plan describing counseling techniques and goals
8. Documents progress of counseling sessions

**Supervisor/Supervisee Initials:**

**Student Diversity in Development and Learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensitivity to Diversity Issues</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sensitive to issues of diversity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Values diversity issues in assessment, consultation, counseling and interventions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Incorporates diversity in case conceptualizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Promotes and appreciates school diversity in the environment</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Supervisor/Supervisee Initials:**
**School Structure, Organization and Climate**

1. Is familiar with components and operating procedures characteristic of effective school-based teams (membership, agenda, written record, action plans, etc.)
2. Plays an active role in student support teams, intervention assistance teams, and communication and referral systems
3. Contributes to a positive school environment in helping to maintain the school as safe, caring, inviting places where there are high expectations for all students
4. Uses consultation, problem-solving skills when working with system-level issues (building or district wide)

**Supervisor/Supervisee Initials**

**Prevention, Wellness Promotion, and Crisis Intervention**

1. Demonstrates preparedness to help in both prevention and intervention programs concerning academic, behavioral, and personal difficulties
2. Recognizes that behaviors that are precursors to development of conduct disorders, internalizing disorders, or school dropout
3. Knows how to design programs to prevent and intervene with problems of conduct disorders, internalizing disorders, and school dropout
4. Knows how to work with school personnel, students, parents, and the general community in the aftermath of crisis
5. Demonstrates an understanding of how to address wellness promotion
as well as diverse health issues

6. Knows how to access resources to address a wide variety of crises

**Supervisor/Supervisee Initials:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home/School/Community Collaboration</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Meets parents’ needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Uses collaborative problem-solving skills in meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Considers parents’ perspectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Conveys credibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Shows an understanding of family influence on student cognitive, motivational, and social characteristics that affect classroom performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Is knowledgeable about family involvement in education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Demonstrates ways to promote partnerships between parents and educators to improve outcomes for students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Demonstrates an understanding of cultural issues that impact home-school collaboration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Working with the Community**

1. Participates in leadership roles in coordinating with other agencies and in forming linkages within the community

2. Demonstrates an understanding of community influence on student cognitive motivational, and social characteristics that affect classroom performance

**Supervisor/Supervisee Initials:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research and Program Evaluation</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
1. Understands measurement practices and outcomes with sufficient depth to evaluate treatment and intervention programs
2. Is able to recommend and explain appropriate treatment and intervention programs to others (teachers, parents)

**Supervisor/Supervisee Initials:**

**Legal, Ethical Practice and Professional Development**

*Legal Ethical Practice*

1. Adheres to all Due Process guidelines in all decisions affecting students
2. Maintains NASP accepted standards in assessment, consultation, and general professional practice
3. Fulfills all legal requirements as in response to law and court decisions

*Professional Development*

1. Shows responsibility for planning and carrying out a continuing program for own development as a professional
2. Shows recognition of own limitations and biases, as well as those areas in which have training and expertise

**Supervisor/Supervisee Initials:**

**Information and Technology**

1. Is familiar with electronic information resources available via the internet and world wide web
2. Knows how to use electronic technology for communication purposes, and to access information relevant to professional practice
3. Knows how to locate, evaluate, and make appropriate use of software supporting professional activities (e.g. test scoring, statistical analysis, reporting, computer-assisted instruction)

**Additional Comments Regarding Intern’s Strengths:**

**Additional Comments Regarding Intern’s Areas of Needed Improvement**

**And/or Areas to Focus on Next Quarter:**

Intern’s Signature: ______________________ Date: ______________________

Supervisor Signature: ______________________ Date: ______________________
Appendix F: Case Study Protocol

I. Framing Theory

In this study, an urban-focused graduate training program in school psychology was placed under the microscope to examine how master’s level students are prepared for urban school placements. The experiences of three urban internship students were studied. Specifically, these case studies focused on the exploration of these students’ levels of hope as they trained in the more challenging environment of the urban school. This exploration was then linked to the students’ sense of commitment to the urban school as a work environment for the long-term, and necessarily describes the graduate training preparation and support they received in developing work-related levels of hopeful thinking. Hope levels become part of the building of the positive institution of the school from the ground up – through the graduates of education training programs. Hope -- identified as a part of the broader positive psychology “family” (Snyder, 2000, p.257) -- becomes “but one pane” in building the window of the school as a positive institution (Snyder, 2000, p.268) – one pane in that which defines the resiliency of the urban practitioner.

II. Exploratory Questions

1. What are the experiences of master’s level school psychology interns on internships in urban settings?
(a) How are these interns prepared for work in urban educational settings? How do they evaluate its effectiveness in their current urban internship settings;
(b) How do these interns perceive the urban school environment;
(c) How has participants’ past work, school experiences, or training contributed to their responses – positive or negative -- to this environment;
(d) How do the interns describe their experiences with clients, supervisors, school and university personnel as they complete their internship experiences?

2. How do these interns experience hope?
(a) Do these interns feel “hopeful” upon the completion of their training as defined by Snyder’s Hope Theory (1991);
(b) How do the interns describe their process of goal-setting with university and school supervisors;
(c) How did field supervisors serve as models of hopeful behavior? How did this hopeful behavior manifest itself?

III. Data Collection Procedures
A. Participants: Three Ohio State master’s level internship students in the school psychology program. These students are the only interns placed in an urban district for the internship year of training and study.
B. Setting: A central city district in Columbus, OH
C. Study Design: multiple case study
D. Data Points: (a) concurrent, semi-structured interviews; (b) pre-study questionnaire; (c) unstructured, participant- observations; (d) document analysis (e) Adult Dispositional Hope Scale; (f) exit survey.

E. Data Analysis: Coding across cases.