

A Study of Hope, Optimism, Academic Performance, and Psychological Well-Being in Law School

Hope Theory (Snyder 1994): Three Components

- Goals: mental targets that guide human behavior
- Pathways Thinking: “waypower” or a person’s perceived ability to generate strategies to reach a goal
- Agentic Thinking: “willpower” or determination

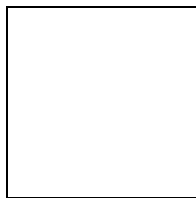
Optimism (Scheier, et al., 1994):

- A “generalized outcome expectancy”
- Optimism has been shown to predict greater well-being even during periods of adversity (Scheier, et al., 2001) and to predict better academic performance in undergraduate school (Chemers, et al., 2001)
- University of Virginia School of Law Study (Satterfield, et al., 1997)

Our Study: Two Questions

1. Whether hope and optimism predict academic performance in law school above and beyond LSAT scores and undergraduate GPA.
2. Whether hope and optimism predict psychological well-being in law school.

Results:



in Law Students: Five Principles

1. Help students formulate appropriate goals.
2. Increase student autonomy.
3. Model the learning process.
4. Help students to understand grading as feedback instead of as pure evaluation.
5. Model/encourage agentic thinking.

Future Research:

Beginning in Fall 2009, we plan to conduct a more extensive study related to hope, optimism, academic performance, and psychological well-being in law school. If your school is interested in participating in this study, please contact us for more information.

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Professor Martin received her J.D. from the University of Illinois College of Law. She teaches in the areas of legal writing and professional responsibility. She has written articles related to teaching and has presented at regional and national conferences on these topics.

Dr. Rand received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Kansas where he worked with Dr. C. R. Snyder, a pioneer in the field of positive psychology. Dr. Rand's research focuses on the influences of hopeful and optimistic thinking on performance and well-being.

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