# Hope in the Lives of Low Income Students of Color: A Qualitative Study of Experiences in a Work-Based Learning Program

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HOPE IN THE LIVES OF LOW INCOME STUDENTS OF COLOR: A

QUALITATIVE STUDY OF EXPERIENCES IN A WORK-BASED LEARNING

PROGRAM


Dissertation

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MARY BETH MEDVIDE

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Hope in the Lives of Low Income Students of Color: A Qualitative Study of Experiences

in a Work-Based Learning Program

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Hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991) is a cognitive framework for understanding how individuals plan and stay motivated to achieve their goals.  Research suggests that high levels of hope among adolescents are associated with academic achievement and markers of career exploration (Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor,    Wood, 2010; Kenny, Walsh-Blair, Blustein, Bempechat, & Seltzer, 2010). However, some scholars have raised criticisms about the conceptual underpinnings of hope and its applicability to the lives of marginalized groups (Tong, Fredrickson, Weining, & Zi, 2010; Riele, 2010). Despite these criticisms, hope theory has been used to study academic achievement among students of color (Chang    Banks, 2007; Roesch, Duangado, Vaughn, Aldridge, and Vilodas, 2010).  Existing studies have most often utilized quantitative frameworks that have provided limited insight into how hope is experienced in the daily lives of low income students of color and how it may embody their relational, social, and cultural contexts. A qualitative framework is well suited for addressing these shortcomings.

The current study employed a phenomenological methodology to explore how low income students of color defined hope and experienced it in their daily lives. Twenty one students enrolled in a work-based learning program at an urban Catholic high school were interviewed individually and participated in a group written activity on hope in their communities.

The results of the study showed that goal pursuit was embedded within a relational context where participants embodied the opportunities and barriers experienced in their families, schools, and communities. The participants defined hope in ways that surpassed existing theory and elucidated the dynamic and sometimes contradictory role of the social context. These findings provide avenues for intervention in the lives of marginalized youth that frame discussions of WBL programs within a larger social context where relational processes are vital for student success.

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**Chapter 1: Problem Statement**

The discrepancies in academic achievement between low-income students of color in urban environments and their White counterparts has been a critical social problem for decades, with historical trends indicating that White students are far more likely to graduate from high school (Kenny, Walsh-Blair, Blustein, Bempechat, & Seltzer, 2010). Even though graduation rates have begun to converge in the last decade, there is still a noteworthy gap between these groups (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). For students of color living in urban areas, structural and systemic barriers, including unemployment, community decay, and discrimination, are harsh realities (Diemer    Blustein, 2007;  Fine, Bloom,    Chjet , 2010), and awareness of these barriers can lead to low academic achievement and school disengagement for some students (Kenny et al., 2007). Research has also begun to uncover protective factors that foster motivation to succeed academically and explore career possibilities (Kenny et al., 2010). Work-based learning (WBL) programs are one type of intervention that can harness these protective factors and may help students to prepare for their vocational futures while still in high school.

This study focused on WBL programs that were developed in response to the School to Work Movement of the 1990s and the passage of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) in 1994. These programs represent a model for secondary education wherein high schools and employers collaborate to offer experiential learning opportunities in the workplace (Weichold, 2009). Initially, the goal of this movement was to help students to internalize the relationship between academics and work and become

more effective members of the workforce, but it has expanded to focus on preparing students for post-secondary education (Kenny et al., 2010).

Short-term evaluations of WBL outcomes have produced mixed results. In some cases, analysis of national data sets showed negative associations between participation in WBL programs and indicators of academic achievement (Bradby    Dykman, 2003). However, other examinations have indicated that these programs buffer against dropout and help students to plan for their academic and vocational futures (Visher, Bhandari, & Medrich,  2004).The loss of federal funding in 2001 prevented systematic evaluation of long-effects, but some of these programs continue through the dissemination of state funding (Weichold, 2009). Although contradictory, the research trends on the effectiveness of WBL programs suggest that this educational model can be effective for helping many students to achieve positive academic outcomes in some contexts (Kazis, 2005; Visher et al., 2004).

Based on the trends reported in these large-scale evaluations from the 1980s and 1990s, it is likely that the success of WBL programs can be attributed in part to structural and systematic characteristics that may help students to become acclimated to the work environment, learn about vocations, and develop tangible skills (Kazis, 2005). Although there are universal aspects to all WBL programs through shared missions and goals, there are also clear distinctions among programs that provide context-specific benefits. Visher et al. (2004) argued that large-scale evaluations are amply suited to assess tangible outcomes across settings, but these studies do not help researchers and practitioners to gain insight into the active mechanisms that are unique to specific types of WBL

programs. Studies that focus on the effects of specific programs can help to answer questions about the impact on students.

One of the defining characteristics of WBL programs is the focus on fostering adaptive agentic action among participants, which can lead to the development of career interests and goals (Weichold, 2009). Promoting action is designed to identify and enhance strengths rather than eliminate deficits. This approach is consistent with the values and goals of vocational psychology where client strengths and resources are at the forefront of assessment and intervention efforts (Solberg, Blustein,    Howard, 2002). Social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) is an often used theoretical framework to frame research agendas.  One of the central tenets of SCCT is that distal and proximal environmental factors interact with individual characteristics, such as self-efficacy and outcome expectations, to influence career interests and goals among students participating in WBL programs (Lent, Hackett, & Brown, 1999). Lent et al. (1999) explained that goal setting is particularly important because it acts as a vehicle for students to develop personal control and agency.

SCCT (Brown et al., 1994; 1999) has noteworthy limitations in understanding how and why students develop career goals. Like Bandura's (1997) theory on which it is based, SCCT provides limited attention to motivational factors that contribute to goal pursuit or to the quality of those goals. SCCT also treats individuals as independent actors with a relative neglect of collaboration and interdependence as crucial precipitants of goal formation (D. Brown, 2000). Critics, such as D. Brown (2000) and Richardson (1993) have argued that this focus on White European values of independence and self-determination does not reflect the values of collectivist cultural groups and aligns most

closely with individuals with social privilege and relatively few socially constructed

barriers to career attainment. Although SCCT is an often used framework for studying the

career development of low-income students of color, the inherent values and the

apolitical frame to which SCCT adheres runs a risk of negating the all-too-often felt

reality of oppression that marginalized youth face because it relies upon an individualistic

point of view to promote self-determination and autonomy (Richardson, 1993).

Moreover, SCCT does not account for the relational, social, and cultural contexts and

values that help some marginalized youth to overcome oppression and through critical

consciousness and empowerment.  Therefore, SCCT provides an often utilized

framework for understanding WBL that offers limited attention to the sociopolitical

nature of work and career, thus making its applicability to oppressed groups tenuous.

Further research this is more socially minded and inherently commitment to

consciousness-raising could more fully elucidate the motivational, relational, and

sociocultural mechanisms that underlie student success by pushing dialogue beyond

individual frames of reference.

The current state of urban public education for low income students of color has

garnered the attention of educators, policy makers, and researchers and has been called

acritical social problem in the 21st century (Fine et al., 2010). Drop-out rates, although

improving, are still alarmingly high (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011),

and the proposed benefits of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) have yet to materialize for

marginalized  groups, with the verdict being among many that NCLB will not be the

vehicle for equal opportunity that low-income students of color need (Fine, Burns, Payne,

Torre, 2004; Lagemann, 2007). The costs of school disengagement become

increasingly hard to overcome in a job market where post-secondary training is an emerging necessity for earning a living wage (Kenny, 2013). Educational programs, such as WBL, may help low-income students of color to make meaningful connections between academics and their vocational futures (Kenny et al., 2010). However, discussions of how to counter the effects of contemporary and historical forms of oppression are dwarfed by individualistic frameworks that emphasize skill development as a solution to the social problem of educational inequalities (Blustein, 2011; Fine et al., 2004). Promising avenues for intervention that are rooted in a commitment to social justice have been offered (Blustein, 2011; Diemer     Blustein, 2007), but this scholarship remains on the margins of discourse within career development. Thus, discussions of how to maximize the benefits of WBL programs may continue to embody the dominant theoretical viewpoints that dismiss, deny, or minimize the legacy of oppression in the lives of low income students of color.

While existing literature has informed researchers, educators, and policy makers on the potential benefits of WBL related to markers of academic achievement and career attainment, little is known about the perceptions of low-income students of color participating in these programs. Currently, there is a dearth of research on how these adolescents perceive and make meaning of their experiences in WBL in light of the supports and barriers in their lives. Asking these students about their experiences directly and  making known the taken for granted assumptions about WBL has the potential to provide insight into these programs based on the lived experiences of these adolescents and the relational, social, and cultural contexts they embody. This can augment existing theoretically-driven, studies on quantifiable outcomes, such as graduation rates and GPA,

by adding a contextualized lens that captures the embodied, lived experiences that are rich with complexity and nuance. This may prove beneficial in creating new avenues for investigation and creating interventions that are responsive to the dynamic contexts these students embody and bring into awareness the lived experiences that have been obscured by individualistic theoretical frameworks. A qualitative study rooted in a phenomenological appreciation of the social context is amply suited for providing low income students of color with an opportunity to become more attuned to their lived experiences.

In summary, research trends have suggested that WBL programs can have a positive impact on students entering the workforce or preparing for post-secondary education. However, much of the research has consisted of large-scale quantitative evaluations that have measured academic outcomes, such as graduation rates, or markers of academic success, such as GPA. Little is known about the effects of specific types of WBL programs for low income students of color in urban environments in helping them to overcome societal messages about academic success. Secondly, research on quantifiable outcomes speaks little to the process of learning about vocations, gaining skills, and interacting with adults in the workplace. Thus, these studies, although informative, do not fully capture the students' experiences and perceptions of these programs. The current study supplemented existing research by using a phenomenological framework to explore the student perceptions and experiences in a corporate work study program. By exploring their perceptions, incremental knowledge may emerge by entering the participants' life worlds, which could inform intervention strategies that are representative of the identified needs and contextual factors that make

participation meaningful for these students. Studies such as this one can supplement research on cross-program benefits (Visher et al.2004) by speaking to the experiences of marginalized groups whose academic achievement and career attainment have emerged as a critical research question of the 21st century.

**Chapter 2:  Literature Review**

This study explored the perceptions of low income students of color student in a WBL program in relation to their future academic and career goals, motivation, and relationships. Although exploratory in nature, the study was grounded in a theoretical base for understanding how students make meaning of their work-related experiences, develop goals, and stay motivated when faced with obstacles. Hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991) provided the conceptual framework to explore how and why these adolescents pursue their goals. Before discussing hope theory, I begin with an overview of WBL programs.

**Work-Based Learning Programs**

Although the United States developed a reputation as pioneer in education throughout the early and mid-20th century, it became increasingly apparent by the 1980s that the country was lagging behind international competitors in math, science, and literacy skills (LaGuardia & Pearl, 2009). The implications of this extended to the global marketplace where the United States was losing its competitive edge compared to countries with stronger students. In response, the federal government commissioned a 1981 study on the state of American education at the time (Lagemann, 2007). The result, *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Educational Excellence, 1983), placed significant blame on the public education system for declining academic achievement, disappointing economic trends, and a workforce that was ill-equipped to match the productive output of global competitors. This report was a far cry from the call in the 1960s on integration and citizenship and effectively shifted education reform efforts towards a business model (LaGuardia & Pearl, 2009).

The bleak depiction of the American education system presented in *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Educational Excellence, 1983) was followed by an equally alarming report on the lives of the "forgotten half," youth who enter directly into the workforce after high school. The William T. Grant Foundation (1988) report argued that in light of rapid social and economic change, work-bound youth were ill-equipped to transition into the workforce because of limited vocational guidance and few tangible skills needed to compete in an increasingly competitive workforce. The report also suggested the existence was a "bimodal society" characterized by college-bound youth who internalized the value of education within a society that privileged their educational potential and work-bound youth who did not receive such benefits.

The William T. Grant Foundation (1988) report called for democratic reform that could change the predominant trends of the 1980s. The report argued that work-bound youth should not be relegated to low-skill, low-wage jobs while college-bound counterparts achieve ongoing career advancement and financial security throughout their working lives. The School to Work Movement of the 1990s and the passage of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) of 1994 emerged as responses to the report and  culminated with funding for school districts to create programs that could to help students develop vocational skills, gain knowledge about the workplace, and ultimately become employable upon graduating (Visher et al.,  2004). These WBL programs included internships, apprenticeships, and mentoring programs where students worked part-time while attending secondary school (Bradby & Dykman, 2003).

Initially, these programs focused on school-to-work transitions for work-bound youth preparing for their first jobs, but the school-to-work movement later expanded to

include college-bound youth and the skills necessary to be successful across the lifespan (Solberg et al., 2002). This also fundamentally shifted the interventions, which became more expansive in scope by nesting career development within a larger social context for these youth. As a result, intervention efforts began to take on a more holistic approach aimed at meeting the students' developmental needs and abilities (Kenny, 2013; Solberg et al., 2002).

Two decades of evaluations of WBL programs during from the 1980s to the early 21st century have produced contradictory findings based on analysis of national samples following cohorts of students through their secondary education. Among a national sample in the late 1980s and the 1990s, Bradby and Dykman (2003) reported a negative relationship between participation in outside employment and achievement test scores for students participating in WBL programs. This suggests that outside employment may represent an opportunity cost because adolescents have less time available to devote to their studies. This has been a longtime criticism of WBL programs by policy makers and educators who favor a conventional model of secondary education. In contrast, positive effects have been reported elsewhere. Visher et al. (2004), for example, utilized longitudinal data on national samples of students who participated in a range of WBL programs in in the late 1990s and early 2000s and found that these students performed better academically and were more likely to graduate from high school than counterparts in traditional school settings.

Bradby and Dykman (2003) argued that some possible reasons for inconsistent research findings are variations by state, school district, and in collaboration between schools and workplaces. The quality of WBL programs is also important, and enrollment

in a program is not sufficient for achieving positive outcomes. These programs must have high standards for the development of vocational competence and academic achievement and motivate students by explicitly linking the quality of the program with enrollment strategies (Kazis, 2005). Visher et al. (2004) also suggested that WBL programs can have differential effects by program type. In their study, this was seen in the enrollment in AP courses and in decisions to take college entrance exams. Students participating in apprenticeships and internships were more likely to take advanced coursework and the SATs and graduate from high school than students in job shadowing, tech prep programs, and cooperative education programs. The loss of federal funding in 2001 prevented systematic evaluation of long-effects, but some of these programs continue through the dissemination of state funding (Weichold, 2009).

Critics and proponents of WBL programs have formed arguments that coincide with these empirical findings. Critics contend that these programs may take valuable time away from classroom learning, which may lead to lower academic achievement. Alternatively, students who are struggling academically may gravitate to work opportunities because they provide a sense of satisfaction and connection that is missing from school participation (Kazis, 2005).  This suggests that WBL programs may provide a sense of meaning for some students that otherwise would be missing from their daily lives. Proponents suggest that learning in context can help adolescents to appreciate the value of education and its connection to future vocational opportunities. By strengthening that connection, students are may be more likely to succeed academically (Visher et al., 2004). What is unclear from the current data is how these programs impact student motivation, foster skills, and promote academic achievement for marginalized groups in

particular. Furthermore, these program evaluations tend to collapse student outcomes across types of WBL programs (Weichold, 2009). Studies that focus exclusively on one type of WBL and the quality of the students' experiences may help to elucidate the mechanisms that help students to develop future goals (Kazis, 2005).

To summarize, research trends using national databases and quantifiable outcomes have produced inconsistent findings on the short-term benefits of WBL programs. These findings should be interpreted cautiously because they may reflect flaws in some types of WBL programs, limitations in sampling, and inconsistencies across studies in operationalizing outcomes as well as inconsistency in the goals of such programs (Kazis, 2005). Overall, the current research on the effectiveness of WBL programs provides crucial insights based upon statistical trends but also leaves unanswered questions about the specific benefits for low-income students of color.

**No Child Left Behind and the (Mis)Education of Students of Color**

Public education currently resides in an era of accountability and standards aimed at improving outcomes for all students. This has emerged as a double-edge sword that promises flexibility and choice but has also foreclosed the options of poor and working class students and people of color (Fine et al., 2010). *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB)*,* the brainchild of the Bush Administration, took effect in 2001 and built upon the legacy of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Educational Excellence, 1983) and two decades of legislative acts aimed at increasing the United States' competiveness in a global economy. It also aimed to decrease the achievement gaps along race and socioeconomic lines (Krieg, 2011). Although this legislation was initially lauded by civil rights groups

for its comprehensive plan for achieving equitable educational outcomes, Fine et al.

(2010) later called NCLB a "cruel hoax" for its inequitable treatment of the most socially

disadvantaged students across the country, particularly low-income students of color

living in urban environments. Arguably one of the most controversial aspects of NCLB is

its requirement for the disaggregation of data on high-stakes testing across racial groups.

For a school to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP), all students within and across

these groups must meet state-determined standards for academic proficiency (Krieg,

2011).

The premise of AYP is to hold schools accountable for the academic achievement

of their students and families and the flexibility for families to leave a school that cannot

provide an adequate education for their children (Krieg, 2011). On the surface, this

should benefit students, but systematic inequality in the allocation of resources and the

availability of quality teachers puts low-income students of color in urban environments

at a distinct disadvantage when competing against more privileged White counterparts

(Fine et al., 2010). While it is true that some schools have not achieved their missions to

effectively educate all students due to subpar teaching or questionable leadership,

Lagemann (2007) argued that schools are nested in sociocultural and political contexts

that significantly impact the educational processes and outcomes available to students.

The rhetoric of NCLB falls short of addressing the social inequalities that underlie

observed difference in academic achievement and clings tightly to the premise of an

"achievement gap" when the reality of underfunding and unjust resource allocation points

towards an "opportunity gap,"  (Fine et al., 2004; Lagemann, 2007). Consequently this

creates an educational sphere where low income students of color are held personally

responsible for gaps in academic performance while a failing policy that does not give them equal access to a legitimate education remains intact and often unquestioned (Fine et al., 2010).

Criticisms of the state of public education for low-income students of color predate NCLB (e.g., Fine, 1991), but Fine et al. (2010) suggested that risks are higher than ever. Low-income students of color are at the mercy of NCLB and find themselves vulnerable to messages of personal accountability and personal failure. When internalized, these messages threaten to strip away self-worth and undergird a culture of shame that permeates schools in disadvantaged urban areas (Fine et al., 2004; Fine et al., 2010). The consequences are bleak, and students may feel abandoned and betrayed by their teachers, school, and society. Some respond through disengagement and dropout while others are mobilized through hope of a solution and social critique (Fine et al., 2004). Although societal messages often portray low-income students of color and their families as disinterested in education, what Fine and colleagues (Fine et al., 2004; 2010) have found is that these students are deeply committed to their futures, but that commitment is nested within distrust of the educational system and an oppressive society and a lingering suspicion that their voices will go unheard.

The Obama administration has taken on the legacy of NCLB and instituted school turnaround grants through Race to the Top (RTTT) that are aimed at helping poorly performing schools and refining accountability standards. The premise of these grants is to award funds through competitions among states and to raise the quality of schools that are often labeled as "drop-out factories," and consistently score in the bottom on state-determined indices of academic proficiency (Texeira de Sousa, 2010). This plan has

garnered ample criticism. In this current economic crisis, Harris (2012) warned that participation in RTTT does not guarantee funding, and funding if secured may go to retaining teachers and programs  at a time when school districts are fighting budget cuts rather than improving the quality of instruction .This may be particularly harmful to disadvantaged urban schools because the competition-based access to funding continues to obscure differential instruction and curriculum quality across school districts, particularly when comparing schools serving students of color with more privileged groups (Saltman, 2012). Texeira de Sousa (2010) warned that incentive-driven initiatives to improve these schools are ultimately hollow because RTTT is not accompanied by other policies aimed at addressing the high levels of poverty that often characterize the neighborhoods surrounding failing schools. Unfortunately, RTTT like its predecessor, NCLB, stands firm on the rhetoric of standardized assessment and a myopic focus on easily deducible outcomes based on mathematical certainties (Texeira de Sousa, 2010). These criticisms of individualistic, competition-driven framework for learning that characterize NCLB and RTTT is similar to critiques of WBL programs and theoretical frameworks, such as SCCT, that are often used to characterize the benchmarks for academic achievement. In both cases, these frameworks assume levels of privilege that do not reflect the lived experiences of many low-income students of color.

Like NCLB before it, RTTT is full of promises to improve educational outcomes for the most vulnerable students but continues to negate and dismiss larger social and systemic issues, such as the effects of poverty, that contribute to the opportunity gap (Texeira de Sousa, 2010). The silencing and isolation that Fine et al. (2004) captured in their work with students of color prior to the implementation of RTTT remains an

ongoing threat, and the declarations of the Obama administration on restoring America's

educational legacy remains elusive for students whose lives are characterized by

pervasive oppression and disregard for their educational futures. The 21$^{st}$ century has

emerged as a time when low-income students are in need of hope in a meaningful and

just education and the opportunity to succeed.

Unfortunately, the goals of the school to work movement of the 1980s and 1990s

stand in conflict with the standards-driven educational reform of NCLB and RTTT and

the sole emphasis on academic proficiency. This has raised questions about the role of

WBL programs in the current educational landscape. Kazis (2005) argued that the

academic skills championed by NCLB are meaningless if high school students are not

given opportunities to learn how to apply them outside of the classroom. This argument

can be extended to RTTT as well. Educational reform focused primarily on academic

standards has yet to answer critical questions on how to prepare students to succeed in a

dynamic labor market. Ultimately, accountability in the classroom becomes void if it

cannot translate to positive career trajectories and work preparedness (Kazis, 2005). This

is particularly important for low incomes students of color who have not benefited from

NCLB and RTTT and remain at greater risk for high school dropout than more privileged

White peers.

Educational reform efforts such as NCLB and RTTT may be failing in part

because of their limited attention to the motivational processes that underlie academic

achievement. The discussion of accountability and choice ultimately fall short in

explaining how and why students choose to engage in school. These questions can be

answered through psychological theories focused on goal-setting and motivation. In the

following sections, I review often used theoretical frameworks for understanding these

constructs.

**Social Cognitive Career Theory: A Framework for Studying WBL Programs**

The School-to-Work Movement drew upon a variety of theoretical frameworks

within vocational psychology to design effective WBL programs. Among these, career

development theories have helped to identify students' developmental needs, form a

coherent base for intervention strategies, and recognize individual differences among

WBL participants (Lent & Worthington, 2000).  Social cognitive career theory (Lent, et

al., 1994) has been especially beneficial for understanding how self-efficacy, outcome

expectations, and relational supports help students to develop vocational skills and

successfully transition into the workplace. This framework and its relationship to hope

theory (Snyder et al., 1991) are discussed below.

Social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994) has been applied to WBL

programs to study how students develop interests and form career goals through

experiential learning exercises and relational support from adults in the workplace.

Based upon Bandura's (1997) work, personal agency forms the core of SCCT through

self-efficacy and outcome expectations.  Self-efficacy is the judgment individuals make

about their abilities to develop and execute specific courses of action needed to reach

desired goals. It is a dynamic, domain-specific belief system, meaning that individuals

may hold differential levels of self-efficacy across academic, vocational, and personal

areas of functioning (Lent et al., 1999). As a dynamic entity, self-efficacy is shaped by

environmental contingencies, such as past experience and vicarious learning, and internal

psychological states. Outcome expectations represent beliefs about the consequences of engaging in a course of action. Of the two, self-efficacy precedes and informs the development of outcome expectations, and the two jointly are hypothesized to positively influence the emergence of career interests and goals (Lent et al., 1994).

In addition to these person-centered variables, SCCT also emphasizes contextual factors that can foster or impede the development of career interests and goals. Lent et al. (1994) defined context in relational and social terms, such as in interactions with teachers and parents or though experiences with structural discrimination. These experiences can shape self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations, thus influencing interest development and goal formation. Some contextual factors may influence the choices available to individuals from the outset whereas other factors may be most prominent during active phases of career decision-making (Lent et al., 1994). For example, structural discrimination has historically negatively impacted students' of color career exploration, but social support from teachers, parents, and friends may help students to develop career goals (Kenny et al., 2007).

The application of SCCT (Lent et al., 1999) to WBL programs has focused predominantly on personal agency, autonomy, and independence with significantly less attention being paid to collectivist worldviews and values, such as collaboration (D. Brown, 2000). While SCCT is notable in its focus on environmental supports and barriers (Lent et al., 1994), political commentary on barriers, such as poverty and discrimination, is noticeably absent from the original theory. The effect, according to Richardson (1993), reflects a narrow focus on the career attainment of individuals with optimal levels of choice and privilege. Within the specific context of WBL programs, Lent and

Worthington (2000) suggested that empirical studies are needed to determine the

applicability of SCCT across populations accessing these programs, although they

supported ongoing scholarly work into culture-specific approaches. This suggests that

SCCT is well-suited for framing some questions about the benefits of WBL programs,

but this theory in isolation may be incomplete in its treatment of the academic

achievement and career attainment of low-income students of color, particularly in light

of ongoing inequities in urban public education.

As a comprehensive and empirically-validated theory, SCCT is often used to

study how low-income students of color develop career goals, but it is not the only

framework that can explicate this process. In the next section, I review hope theory

(Snyder et al., 1991). Scholarly contributions by Snyder and colleagues (Snyder et al.,

1991; Snyder, 1995; Snyder & Feldman, 2000) share conceptual similarities with SCCT

but also provide incremental valuable perspective on the questions raised in this study.

**Hope Theory: A Cognitive Framework for Understanding Goals**

Snyder et al. (1991) defined hope as a hierarchically organized system of

cognitive appraisals that act as a positive motivational force. At the top of the hierarchy is

global, trait-like hope about one's ability to reach life goals in general. Below, it is

domain-specific, state-like hope in areas such as work and academics. Within each

domain, goal-specific hope is formed as new tasks are started (Snyder, 1995).  These

types of hope form reciprocal relationships with each other. Hope at one level of the

hierarchy can foster or inhibit hope at other levels (Snyder et al., 1991).

At all levels of the hierarchy, hope consists of two principle components,

pathways and agency. Pathways are the perceived capacity to develop the steps to reach a

goal, and agency is the motivation to enact those steps (Snyder et al., 1991).  The relationship between hope and its principle components has been an area of debate. Snyder et al.'s (1991) model treats pathways and agency as equivalent to hope. When agency and pathways are present in sufficient amounts, hope is present. Elsewhere in the literature, authors have argued that pathways and agency are related to hope or perhaps form a crucial precursor to hope, but they are not synonymous with hope (Tong Fredrickson, Weining, & Zi, 2010).  Exactly how pathways and agency interact to form hope is an elusive and often criticized aspect of this theory that is discussed in more detail below.

In summary, hope is a cognitive construct that delineates the process by which individuals plan and execute goals and appraise their actions. Hope develops globally and in situation-specific contexts related to specific tasks (Snyder et al., 1991). It is comprised of necessary components that must be present for individuals to reach their goals. In the section to follow, I outline areas of similarities and divergence between hope and related theoretical constructs.

**Areas of Convergence and Divergence with Self-Efficacy and Optimism**

There are noteworthy similarities between hope and the constructs of self-efficacy and optimism, although Snyder et al. (1991) argued that these areas of conceptual convergence do not undermine the distinctiveness of hope as a motivational process. Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory identified two forms of expectancies based on one's confidence that a particular course of behavior will lead to a desirable outcome (outcome expectations) and confidence in one's ability to produce those behaviors (efficacy expectations). Snyder (1995) believed that outcome expectations are similar to

pathways and efficacy expectations to agency, but differ in the temporal relationship to each other. In Bandura's (1997) theory, efficacy expectations precede and influence efficacy expectations whereas pathways and agency work in concert to influence goal directed behavior (Snyder, 2002). Therefore, hope is comprised of the simultaneous processes of pathways and agency rather than a step-wise progression of these constructs. Furthermore, although agency is similar to self-efficacy, it is more of a measure of motivation to act as opposed to perceived ability to act (Juntunen & Wettersten, 2006). In this sense, agency lacks a self-evaluative component that is fundamental to self-efficacy.

Optimism, which is defined as a generalized expectancy of a positive outcome (Scheier and Carver, 1985), has also been compared to hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991) because both perspectives shared the fundamental assumption that people are inherently goal-directed and future oriented  (Carver    Scheier, 2000). Scheier and Carver's (1985) theory is the perspective most often compared to Snyder et al.'s (1991) work. This framework presumes that individuals have general confidence about the future events that are under their control or left to chance. Goals may stem from personal effort or luck, and optimism may develop as a consequence of either (Juntunen    Wettersten, 2006). This suggests that personal agency is not a fundamental component of optimism, which is a key difference compared to hope. Additionally, because planning is not as the integral to Scheier and Carver's (1985) theory, optimism is less of a process-driven construct than hope. Thus, optimism, by definition, does not require individuals to know how to achieve positive outcomes. It only requires that individuals believe such outcomes are possible regardless of whether or not the outcomes are within the individuals' control (Carver Scheier, 2002). Hope, through its emphasis on personal agency and ongoing appraisal,

stems from sustained, systematic personal effort, and thrives when outcomes are under the individuals' control (Snyder et al., 1991). Optimism, in contrast, does not require controllable events, and it is entirely likely that individuals can be optimistic about an event outside of their control (Scheier    Carver, 1985). Therefore, hope is likely to be a better suited construct when ongoing planning for a tangible, controllable event is required.

In summary, Snyder et al.'s (1991) cognitive framework for delineating hope shares conceptual similarities with self-efficacy and optimism because it helps to explain how people think about the future and pursue their goals. Hope supplements Bandura's (1997) theory because it suggests that efficacious beliefs coexist and act simultaneously to produce sustained, systematic goal pursuit. Snyder et al.'s (1991) theory also adds explanatory value over optimism by giving weight to process and outcome. This suggests that hope is likely to be a unique contributor to how students talk about their experiences in WBL that can supplement existing perspectives and be utilized as a theoretical basis for further investigation. However, like other theoretical perspectives discussed thus far, hope is conceptualized within an individualistic frame of reference where autonomy and self-determined action are at the core of goal-directed behaviors, and questions about the role of the social context are left largely unanswered. Therefore, hope theory (Snyder et al. 1991) may provide a basis for further investigation, but its utility as a stand alone framework for understanding the lived experiences low income students of color is limited by its tendency to decontextualize pathways and agency and disregard the impact of an oppressive social context.

**Measurement of Hope: Foundations and Criticisms**

Not long after introducing hope theory, Snyder et al. (1991; 1996) developed scales to measure trait and state hope respectively. Snyder et al.'s (1991) Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (ADHS) assessed for trait hope and was developed with samples in college, inpatient, and community mental health centers. These samples were predominantly White, and the majority of the sample consisted of undergraduate psychology students enrolled in the University of Kansas in the late 1980s. This suggests that these students' lives were characterized by a certain level of social privilege that is unlikely to be shared across racial, ethnic, and class lines. The ADHS includes four questions to assess for pathways and four questions to assess for agency. A sum score is calculated and higher scores are indicative of higher levels of hope. Snyder et al. (1991) reported acceptable internal consistency and validity properties. Presumably, then, a total score indicative of high levels of hope may be driven by high levels of both pathways and agency or possibly extremely high scores in either area.

Carver and Scheier (2002) raised concerns about how agency is measured and suggested that agency questions may actually reflect general confidence about the future based on perceptions of past success rather than confidence about an actual goal. Additionally, the agency items may not address the extent to which potential problem-solving strategies will prove to be effective in the presence of known obstacles (Tennen, Affleck,    Tennen, 2002; Tong et al., 2010). According to Tennen et al. (2002), these are the benchmarks that should define agency thinking, and they are noticeably missing from the ADHS scale.

The criticisms cited above have important implications for how scores on the ADHS are used for assessments and interventions. Scores on the ADHS (Snyder et al., 1991) are likely to reflect perceptions about goal-setting ability and the likelihood of success that may not correspond to individuals' abilities to accomplish their goals. This distinction is important when using the ADHS to help implement interventions because perceptions of success may not be related to an established skill set, and such perceptions are not sufficient in the absence of ability to achieve one's goals (Carver & Scheier, 2002). Within the context of the current study, students who believe they can be successful in the future must also develop the necessary skills, whether pursuing post-secondary education or entering the workforce.

Another criticism of the ADHS (Snyder et al., 1991) is that the items assessing agency and pathways may not reflect the layperson's understanding of hope. Tong et al. (2010), for example, compared qualitative responses about personal growth and hope about the future to scores on the ADHS in a predominantly White sample of college undergraduates in the Midwest. They found that the participants who received high scores on the ADHS described being hopeful about the future without necessarily being motivated to reach a particular goal. These findings supported arguments by Carver and Scheier (2002) that agency, as measured by the ADHS, is more likely to represent a general positive feeling about the future as opposed to motivation to execute a current goal. Tong et al. (2010) also found that qualitative responses did not fully support a pathways component of hope because participants were likely to endorse hopeful thinking without also identifying the means to achieve their goals.  Thus, these findings suggest that items on the ADHS may not reflect these how people define hope.

**Trait Hope as a Predictor of Academic Achievement and Job Performance**

Despite criticisms of how hope theory is defined and measured, Snyder's work (Snyder et al., 1991; 1996) has often been used to study positive academic outcomes in adolescence. Gilman, Dooley, and Florell (2006) found that high levels of trait hope among a predominantly White, middle-class sample of middle-school and high school students were associated with higher grade point averages (GPAs) and fewer indications of psychological distress. Similarly, Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, and Wood (2010) found that trait hope predicted high school GPAs over a three year span beyond the explanatory power of general intelligence, previous academic performance, and personality traits in a similar sample of students.

A series of studies by Peterson and Byron (2008) examined the relationship between trait hope and job performance in a predominantly White, middle-class sample of salesmen, mortgage brokers, and management executives. The findings showed that participants with high levels of trait hope were given higher job performance ratings by their supervisors up to one year later and provided higher quality solutions to a hypothetical work problem. These findings were statistically significant for all participants regardless of the type of position they held, and maintained significance after controlling for self-efficacy and general cognitive ability. The results of the Peterson and Byron (2008) study are consistent with the academic achievement studies with adolescents detailed above. These trends indicate that trait hope had enduring effects on tangible markers of success in a specific context, even after considering the potential impact of other known predictors. Whether that context is secondary education or the workforce, hope seems to be associated with anticipation of positive outcomes and the

motivation to purse goals given these perceptions. Unfortunately the correlational nature of these studies' designs could not provide insight into the mechanisms underlying these enduring effects. Furthermore, use of predominantly White samples raise questions about the context whereby hope is realized and the nature of obstacles to planning and motivation. This is addressed in greater detail below.

**Hope in the Relational Context: Conceptual Arguments and Empirical Trends**

Based upon Snyder et al.'s (1991) theory, researchers have begun to study the antecedents of hopeful thinking. Relational influences, especially in childhood and adolescence, are one area for investigation because an understanding how hope naturally forms can inform structured interventions in academic, vocational, and therapeutic domains (Cheavens, Feldman, Woodward, & Snyder, 2006). Based upon attachment theory, Snyder et al. (1991) argued that parents model hopeful thinking to their children early in life by teaching them how to set goals. Children whose relationships with their parents are characterized by mistreatment, abuse, or neglect may never receive these benefits and go through life at a distinct disadvantage. Consequently, these children may struggle to set goals and may show symptoms of psychological distress later in life (Snyder et al., 2002).  The consequences of insecure parenting may extend into adulthood and have lasting effects on hope.  For example, Shorey, Snyder, Yang, and Lewin (2003) (2002) integrated hope theory with attachment theory and found that college students who recalled being securely attached to their parents reported high levels of hope than counterparts who recalled their parents as dismissive or ambivalent. They also reported fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Supportive relationships are not limited to parents, and many children and adolescents may benefit from support from adults in school settings. Snyder, Shorey, Rand, and Buskist (2006) discussed this possibility in their work on fostering hope among students at risk for academic failure or dropout.  According to Snyder et al. (2006), when students have low levels of hope, they are also likely to have low academic expectations or even drop out of high school. Teachers can provide a vital defense against school disengagement by fostering planning and motivation when students are faced with obstacles to their academic goals. In more extreme cases, they may help students to identify realistic goals. The authors did not attend to demographics when identifying students at risk nor did Snyder et al. (2006) define obstacles to achievement within a political or social context outside of students' immediate experiences in classes. Despite this flaw, the premise of their argument is promising if it can be successfully applied to marginalized populations where the definition of "at risk" extends beyond individualistic frameworks for academic achievement.

These studies and conceptual papers suggest that hope is nurtured, especially in relationships with supportive adults, and the benefits extend from childhood into adulthood. These discussions of hope within a relational context add depth and complexity to a construct that is often defined primarily cognitive terms (Snyder et al., 2006). Despite the attention to how hope is developed, maintained, or enhanced with the help of supportive others, the measurement of hope using available assessment tools is focused exclusively on planning and motivation devoid of the relational factors that are likely to undergird goal-directed behaviors. This may very well limit the extent to which to which these scales capture the characteristics of hopeful thinking. It also does not give

clinicians, school personnel, and workplace supervisors access to the range of possibilities for using social connections to mitigate against threats to goal pursuit.

The research described above focused primarily on trait hope, which Snyder et al. (1991) placed at the top of their hierarchy as the most global and stable form of hope in their model. Their model also included state-like hope that is contextually-bound and dynamic, making it more likely to be impacted by supportive adult relationships and more amenable to structured interventions. Work hope is one form of state hope and has the greatest relevance to this study. I discuss work hope below.

**Work Hope: A Domain-Specific Type of Hope**

Work hope is an extension of Snyder et al.'s (1991) theory by delineating the reciprocal relationship between pathways and agency within the vocational context. Sympson (1999) was the first to measure it by amending the State Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1996) to develop the Domain-Specific Hope Scale (DSHS), where work hope was one of six life domains of interest. Although the work subscale showed sufficient internal consistency, Juntunen and Wettersten (2006) noted several limitations. First, the content validity of the scale was questionable because Sympson (1999) did not provide an operational definition of work hope. Secondly, the work subscale included questions on pathways and agency but did not include items to assess for goals. Finally, there was little research validating Sympson's (1999) work hope subscale.

These limitations of the DSHS (Sympson, 1999) formed the basis for the Work Hope Scale (WHS; Juntentun & Wettersten, 2006). The authors defined work hope as a positive motivational state specifically within the vocational domain and characterized by the ability to plan and the motivation to carry out steps to achievework-related goals.

Based on this operational definition, the WHS included three subscales designed to measure pathways, agency, and goals. In the pilot study, the scale was normed on a general population in the Midwest that was predominantly White and college-educated, although racial and ethnic minorities, adolescents, and the working-poor were also sampled. Juntunen and Wettersten (2006) identified limitations based on their small, diverse sample that made it difficult to identify population specific response patterns. Secondly, test-retest properties were examined using a convenience sample of college students. The internal consistency of the WHS with the small, diverse sample was low, although adequate according to Juntunen and Wettersten (2006), and improved using the convenience sample.

The validity evidence for the WHS (Juntunen    Wettersten, 2006) was mixed. Confirmatory factor analysis did not reveal the presence of three distinct subscales and suggested on the contrary that work hope was a unitary construct consisting of three interdependent components. Additionally, the use of a small, diverse sample did not allow for examination of differential levels of hope based on levels of economic advantage. The results also suggested that the WHS is sensitive to group differences, which is consistent with previous work by Snyder et al. (1991) on trait hope in clinical populations. Tests showed that work hope's correlations with vocational identity, optimism, and self-efficacy were sufficient to establish discriminant validity. With regard to convergent validity, correlations between the goals subscale of the WHS and Sympson's (1999) Work Goals Scale were lower than expected and did not strongly indicate that the scales measured similar underlying constructs. Juntunen and Wettersten (2006) provided two possible explanations for this. First, one of the two scales did not

accurately measure hope in the vocational domain or conversely, the complexity of work hope cannot be captured adequately be either scale. Neither possibility is ideal because a fundamental assumption in scale development is that a scale will effectively and efficiently measure a construct of interest. Juntunen and Wettersten (2006) suggested that further research is warranted to delineate the theoretical underpinnings of work hope, but this has yet to be undertaken in the career development literature. Work hope is a promising construct in vocational psychology that may help researchers and clinicians to understand goal-directed behavior, but its potential is yet untapped because of the gap between theory and measurement. Research to close that gap is vital to creating interventions that help students to plan and stay motivated in pursuing their career-related goals.

**Research Using the Work Hope Scale**

Although some of the psychometric properties of the WHS are questionable, it has been used in the career development literature to study vocational and academic outcomes in college populations. Duffy, Allan, and Dik (2011) found that work hope mediated the relationship between a sense of meaning derived from work and a sense of satisfaction about academic decisions. This suggests that deriving meaning from work fosters planning and motivation, which in turn leads to greater satisfaction with efforts to achieve goals. Yakushko and Sokolova (2010) studied work hope in a sample of Ukrainian college students and found similar results. Students in this study who endorsed higher levels of work hope also reported greater personal agency, higher self-esteem, and more optimistic views about future employment opportunities.

Juntunen and Wettersten (2006) envisioned work hope as an expansive and inclusive construct that is applicable to the lives of all individuals across the lifespan. Research to date has focused primarily on college students, but goals are also critical for adolescents exploring career options. Indeed, Juntunen and Wettersten (2006) included adolescents participating in a College-Bound program when creating the WHS. However, despite the potential for studying work hope in this population, few studies to date have focused exclusively on how hope is manifested in low-income students of color. Among the few studies available to review, Kenny et al. (2010) found that work hope was associated with positive attitudes about academics and career planning among students participating in a WBL program.

Juntunen and Wettersten (2006) suggested that work hope is a viable target for intervention for several reasons. Conceptually, work hope provides a domain-specific understanding of how individuals set goals and stay motivated in their jobs. As a form of state hope, it is more malleable than trait hope, which first develops in childhood as a broad orientation to life goals. This is important for adolescents who are at the early stages of career exploration and beginning to develop career interests. As an assessment tool, the WHS may prove beneficial for clinicians because scores could be used to frame intervention efforts related to planning and motivation. For example, findings from the WHS could help counselors to delineate the relationship among these constructs to determine how clients reach or abandon their goals. Additionally, its conceptual similarities to self-efficacy allow the WHS to fit within a social cognitive career framework and may offer incremental benefit beyond self-efficacy in understanding the role of motivation in career decision-making. Finally, Juntunen and Wettersten (2006)

suggested that the WHS may be beneficial for disenfranchised groups, especially if differential levels of hope exist based on sources of privilege. Thus, work hope may be a viable target for intervention in helping disenfranchised clients to overcome structural and systemic barriers that negatively impact career decision making. To date, though, this remains a largely unexplored possibility, and the experiences of low-income students of color tend to be relegated to the background of research on hope as a driving mechanism for academic achievement and career attainment.

**Hope at the Intersection of Race and Social Class**

Although hope theory (Snyder at al., 1991) has generated decades of research, questions about its applicability across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups remain. Snyder (1995) suggested that racial and ethnic minority individuals are likely to have less hope than White counterparts because of a greater number of barriers to successful goal pursuit. Few studies have actually tested this possibility empirically. A study by Chang and Banks (2007) compared levels of hope among a racially diverse sample of undergraduate students in the Northeast. Although the authors noted historical and contemporary forms of oppressions that racial minority groups have faced in the United States, they did not explicitly study how ongoing prejudice and discrimination may impact levels of hope when comparing racial minority students to their more privileged White counterparts   The authors did suggest that hope is a construct of "universal relevance" across racial and ethnic groups. Differences in hope, as Chang and Banks (2007) argued, may be a matter of degree rather than differences in the underlying nature of hope. Elsewhere in the literature, qualitative studies, have suggested that hope is more contextually-bound and may have components that function as a result of the interplay

among specific individual, social, cultural, and political factors (Isaacs & Savahl, 2014; Nalkur, 2009). These studies have focused on school age youth in South Africa and Tanzania, but their findings that hope is bound by contextual factors, such as supportive adult relationships and community characteristics, are applicable to low income students of color in the United States. Therefore, even though hope may be universal in some respects, qualitative studies of youth in Africa have suggested that it is experienced in ways that are embedded in how individuals make meaning of their environments.

Presumably, differing levels of hope may be associated with the pervasive effects of prejudice and discrimination, which could be defined as barriers to goal pursuit (Riele, 2010; Snyder, 1995), but this possibility was not directly tested by Chang and Banks (2007). The authors found that college students across racial groups did differ in levels of hope as operationalized using scores on Snyder et al.'s (1991) ADHS. The pattern of results contradicted the authors' hypotheses and indicated that Black and Hispanic students actually had higher scores on the pathways and agency subscales than White counterparts. According to Chang and Banks (2007), this suggests that obstacles to goal formation may actually be associated with greater hope among racial minority students.

This finding may reflect the resilience of the participants in the sample who have achieved a certain level of academic achievement despite the presence of socially constructed barriers. This is a valuable finding on goal setting among a more diverse sample of college students than is typically seen in the literature on hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991). However, Chang and Banks' (2007) study lacks insight into the mechanisms underlying hope for students of color who have yet to secure a place in post-secondary education.  This is a crucial gap in the literature where additional research is needed. A

small but promising body of literature has focused on hope in students of color in the United States. Adelabu (2008) found that high levels of hope and positive ethnic identity were predictors of academic achievement among African American students in urban and rural high schools. A study by Roesch, Duangado, Vaughn, Aldridge, and Vilodas (2010) on hope among minority students in a residential summer program in southern California found that participants with high levels of hope utilized more active coping strategies, such as seeking advice, than counterparts who had low levels of hope.

Scholars, such as Fine (1991; Fine & Ruglis, 2009), have discussed hope as a form of resistance against social inequities and pervasive racism. This suggests that the nature of hope is contextually bound and present not only within individuals but also within communities that have experienced historical and contemporary forms of oppression. A consistent and unfortunate finding of Fine's (1991; Fine    Ruglis, 2009) work has been that not all students are able to resist government-sanctioned messages of personal failure and are left to cope with crippling shame that they should have done more to succeed. Low income students of color are increasingly faced with dialogues that NCLB and RTTT are sound educational reform efforts that work for deserving students and sent a message that their personal failings are solely responsible for poor academic performances. Thus,  they are left to face the harsh realities or urban education with little or no support for the barriers they face (Fine et al., 2004; Texeira de Sousa, 2010). Chang and Banks' (2007) findings may speak to hope as an outcome for low-income students of color who successfully graduated and entered post-secondary education, but it is also feasible that the outcome reported by these authors does not resonate at the intersection of race and social class for many other students. Studies by Roesch et al. (2010) and

Adelabu (2008) have begun to provide insight into academic achievement and positive wellbeing for these students, but the mechanism behind these outcomes remains elusive and continues to stem from an individualistic frame of reference.   Research treating hope as a possibility, although one all too often foreclosed, for low-income students of color can begin to unpack Chang and Banks' (2007) assertions on universality and specificity of hope within a framework that places greater emphasis on differential access to opportunity than was initially provided in their study. Thus, the Chang and Banks (2007) study raises questions about hope within a sociocultural and political context, but answers to these questions are likely to be found by venturing outside of hope theory's well-established cognitive paradigm and adherence to individualistic values.

**The Phenomenology of Hope Theory: Duality in a Multifaceted World**

Snyder (1995) has called hope "phenomenological in nature" because of appraisal processes that individuals use to pursue their goals. This assertion is promising but ultimately problematic because hope is defined in cognitive, motivational terms. Although more recent iterations of theory have begun to address affective components of hope that arise through the appraisal process (Tong et al., 2010), hope continues to be defined a s a cognitive exercise rather than an embodied, lived experience. For hope to truly be considered a phenomenological experience, it must be viewed as complex and layered with emergent meanings that are made known over time and across contexts (Finlay, 2014).  To understand hope as it is experienced by low income students of color, it is necessary to put aside the taken for granted ways of knowing that characterize the literature on hope and look at the phenomenon with fresh eyes.

**Aim of the Current Study**

Hope theory is a cognitive framework understanding how individuals plan and execute their goals. in this context, recent quantitative studies have shown promising results in academic and vocational contexts (Gilman et al., 2010; Kenny et al., 2010). Hope theory, despite its appeal, has noteworthy conceptual limitations in understanding why individuals are motivated to achieve goals, and how goal-setting is supported within specific relational, social, and cultural contexts (Riele, 2010). Existing studies have begun to address these questions by comparing racial minority individuals to White counterparts on measures of hope, goal-setting, and academic ability (Chang     Banks, 2007). Related research has also begun to focus on hope specifically within racial minority high school students (Adelabu, 2008; Roesch et al., 2010). Trends here suggest that hope is positively associated with ethnic identity, adaptive coping styles, and academic achievement, but the ways that hope is experienced on a daily basis remains largely unanswered.

A small but promising subset of the literature on students' experiences in WBL programs has focused on hope and found that planning and agency are associated with positive outcomes in career and academics (Kenny et al., 2010; Wandeler & Bundick, 2011). These studies help to delineate how adolescents, including low-income students of color, in WBL programs achieve their goals. However, the use of correlational designs limits the extent to which underlying mechanisms can be studied in an in-depth manner. Furthermore, the reliance on quantitative methodology creates a gap between the participants' lived experiences and the responses available to them through survey-based assessment tools. To rectify this limitation, a phenomenological stance should be taken to

move past definitions of hope confined to theory and begin to move towards an embodied, holistic approach to understanding the lives of low income students who participate in WBL programs. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to use a phenomenological approach to provide new insights to the characteristics of WBL programs from the perspective of the adolescents who participated in them and to make known the relational, social, and cultural contexts that contribute to the way hope is experienced.

**Chapter 3: Methodology**

This study explored hope in the lives of low-income minority adolescents who participate in a work-based learning program while attending high school. The primary research question was: How do these adolescents make meaning of their lives and explicate hope in their everyday experiences? Additional research inquiries following under the auspice of this central research question included: 1) what is the essence of hope as it relates to participation in work-based learning programs? and 2) what is the essence of hope as it relates to future goals? These research questions were examined through the lenses of a phenomenological framework.

Much of the research on WBL to date has focused on quantifiable outcomes and statistical trends across diverse groups of students (Visher et al., 2004). Significantly less attention has focused on the lived experiences of low-income minority adolescents. There is a dearth of research on the processes that may help to make WBL programs meaningful for these young people and can foster a sense of hope about the future. Qualitative methodologies provide an advantage over quantitative approaches by staying close to the actual experiences of participants and using their own words to frame understanding of events and phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). This may be especially important in the lives of marginalized populations whose voices have historically been excluded from dialogues within career development (Richardson, 1993).

Among the qualitative methodologies available, phenomenology was well-suited for this study because of its emphasis on embodied contexts and experiential meaning making where implicit assumptions become known based upon the way that individuals remember and re-embody their through the process of speaking to an empathic listener

(Finlay, 2014) . The benefit of this phenomenological stance is its ability to move past habitual ways of knowing to make explicit the meanings that are rooted in a discovery of the world as it is understood in that moment and across time (Applebaum, 2013).  When conceptualizing hope, Snyder (1995) called it phenomenological in nature based upon the active meaning-making processes and intentionality that underlie hopeful thinking. Niles (2011) confirmed this point by discussing hope as dynamic process that requires flexibility, awareness, reflection, and appraisal skills. Although hope has certain underlying commonalities across individuals, namely pathways and agency, Niles (2011) suggested that it is also idiosyncratic through the way that that individuals uniquely interact with the environment to reach their goals. Whether in clinical practice or interpersonal relationships (Snyder, 1995; Turner, 2005), the ability to foster hope is experienced through ongoing, meaningful interactions. This is consistent with a focus in phenomenology on individuals' perceptions of a commonly experienced phenomenon rather than an emphasis on objective accounts (Creswell, 2012).

Phenomenology is a research methodology that is indebted to the philosophical writings of Husserl (1964) whose work focused on the nature of consciousness and how people make meaning of their everyday experiences. This approach attempts to capture the essence of a phenomenon from the perspectives of those experiencing it (Ahmed, 2007). Thus, one of the underlying assumptions of phenomenology is that the way that people understand their environments is intricately linked to their perceptions (Finlay, 2014). This informs an approach by the researcher that is faithful to people's accounts of phenomenon rather than reducing their experiences to statistical trends (Applebaum, 2013). Creswell (2012) suggested that this hallmark of phenomenology is particularly

important in challenging the "normative assumptions" of research paradigms where individual narratives are reframed as quantifiable units of meaning.  Beabout et al. (2008) adopted this approach in studying school reform in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and their phenomenological study indicated that rebuilding efforts were associated with individual perceptions of hope and cynicism about the possibility of change.

A phenomenological stance was essential for the current study due to the relative neglect of low income minority students' lived experiences when delineating the benefits of WBL programs. Research thus far has largely reported statistical trends on outcomes of these programs, such as GPA or SAT scores. Consequently, the day-to-day experiences of the students attending these programs and the meaning that is taken from that may be lost when reduced to tangible measurements of achievement. Much like Beabout et al. (2008) moved discussion of school reform beyond tangible quantifiable outcomes by capturing the essence of the change process for those most affected by these policy initiatives, this study aimed to demonstrate how desirable student outcomes are associated with the meaning these adolescents attribute to their experiences. Similarly, the current study aimed to move past taken for granted assumptions about the nature of hope to capture its essence for low income students of color participating in WBL programs by "looking afresh." (Finlay, 2014) rather than continuing to focus on outcome measures, such as GPA or SAT scores.

A phenomenological approach has been successfully undertaken in previous studies on hope in young people. Turner (2005) used phenomenology to study how at-risk Australian adolescents and emerging adults conceptualize and capitalize on hope to cope with homelessness, psychological distress, substance abuse, and unemployment.

The focus on adolescents' experiences indicates that young people's insights into hope and its meaning are amenable to a phenomenological approach where the participants' capacity for reflection and self-awareness are emphasized in the data analysis process.

In discussing phenomenology, Ahmed (2007) suggested that people do not simply live within a certain context but come to embody their surroundings and the things afforded to them. From this standpoint, the individual and the social environment are inseparable, and an understanding of the self is predicated on interactions with the social world. This premise of phenomenology is also consistent with Snyder's (1995) conceptualization of hope and the goal of this study to explore how meanings attributed to WBL are derived from ongoing participation in these programs.  Consistent with Ahmed's (2007) argument, the embodiment that low-income minority students enact is not limited to WBL programs but also represents the embodiment of educational careers within the context of NCLB and RTTT. The embodiment of the social context as a facet of hope is also a prevalent theme in the Beabout et al. (2008) study where the educational context was nested within a post-Katrina landscape. In this study, the educational context is nested within an urban environment characterized by poverty, racism, and xenophobia. Furthermore, this self-social world interaction is consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of hope theory (Snyder et al. 1991) and Niles' (2011) application of hope theory to career development.

**Site Location**

Participants were recruited from a Catholic high school that primarily serves economically disadvantaged students. The school is located in an urban center in the Northeast. The school has an active corporate work-study program where students work

five days per month in a corporate setting including legal, medical, financial, and educational institutions, in public and private sectors. Economically disadvantaged students are eligible to participate in the corporate work-study for the entirety of their high school careers and receive tuition remission in exchange for participation. Based upon statistics provided by the school, the average family income of students attending the school is $32,256, and 81% of students qualify for free or reduced-cost lunch. The student body is composed primarily of Hispanic and African American students. The majority of the students enrolled in this high school attended public schools in the past.

**Participants**

Male and female adolescents were selected using a criterion sampling that is consistent with a phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2012). The inclusion criteria for the study were: 1) at least one year of prior participation in the corporate work-study program, 2) exposure to conversations about academics and career opportunities within the work and school contexts, 3) willingness to participate in a group activity and individual interview and 4) identification as a racial or ethnic minority. Based on the criteria presented above, the sample consisted of upperclassmen (17 juniors, 4 seniors). Although this is a large sample for a phenomenological study, the number of participants is within an acceptable range (Creswell, 2012). In total, there were ten males and eleven females ranging in age from 16 years to 18 years, with the average age being 17.06 years (SD = .80). The self-reported races and ethnicities were 9 Hispanic, 4 Black/African American, 4 Black Caribbean, 1 Black/Cape Verdean, 1 Black/Native American, and 2 Multiracial.  The researcher did not request academic records from the school or require the students to report their GPA.

**The Researcher**

The researcher is a White female doctoral candidate in a counseling psychology program at a religiously affiliated university in the Northeast. The school is located in the suburbs outside of a large urban area. The researcher has previous experience conducting qualitative research on WBL programs, including studies with students, alumni, teachers, and workplace supervisors. She has worked in urban areas in the past as a researcher and a clinician. As a clinician, she worked primarily with older children and adolescents who identified as racial and ethnic minorities.

**Procedure**

The procedures selected for this study reflect methods that have been successfully used with low-income students of color in the past, qualitative studies with adolescents, and phenomenological studies of hope. Although phenomenological studies typically rely upon transcripts from participant interviews, Creswell (2012) suggested that other data collection methods may also be used provide that they can capture the embodied experiences of the participants. More information about the group written activity and the individual interviews, including the basis for selecting them, is provided below.

I received approval to conduct the study from the university IRB and the president of the high school. After securing the necessary approvals, I met with the school guidance counselor and the work-study coordinator to discuss the logistics of recruiting and interviewing students. These staff members provided me with information on student schedules. To recruit students, I made an announcement to students during their homeroom period. This announcement outlined the purpose of the study, requirements

for participation, and incentives. Students who were interested in the study were given informed consents and informed assents to complete prior to data collection.  Incentives for participation consisted of the participants' choice of a ten dollar gift card for iTunes or Amazon. The participants received a gift card regardless of whether or not they completed the study.

**Group Activity.** The group activity took place in a school classroom and lasted approximately one hour.  To begin the activity, I introduced myself, discussed the purpose of the study, and reviewed informed consent. Following these introductory comments, the participants engaged in a brainstorming activity to generate thinking about what hope means. I facilitated brainstorming by writing the participants' responses on the blackboard. The brainstorming activity included the entire class. Students were given the prompt: "What do you think about when you hear the word hope?" I encouraged them to discuss this prompt as a large group and contribute answers. I wrote the student responses on the blackboard. This procedure is consistent with established research strategies. Brainstorming activities with adolescents have been used previously to prime students to think about their experiences relative to the purpose of a study and to establish rapport (McIntyre, 2000).

Following the brainstorming activity, the students participated in the story-telling activity. They were given writing materials and were asked to write a response to the following prompt:

Imagine that a team of investigators are coming to Boston. They are studying

hope. The team would like you to show them places, people, and things that bring

you hope. What would you show them? Why?

The prompt was based upon McIntyre's (2000) work with low-income students of

color in an urban setting. This format for the writing prompt was consistent with

strategies to elicit thinking about sense of community (McIntyre, 2000), experiences of

hope (Isaacs    Sahavl, 2014; Nalkur, 2009), and career goals among adolescents (Kenny

et al., 2007).

**Individual Interviews.**  I conducted all of the interviews during study hall periods and

after school. Interviews ranged in length from 30 to 55 minutes. All of the interviews

were conducted in an empty office to ensure privacy.  At the outset, I reviewed informed

consent and confidentiality with the participants. All interviews were audiotaped with

participant permission and identified using participant identification numbers. The

interview followed a semi-structured interview format with a set list of questions and

prompts asking students to elaborate on or clarify their answers.  I was able to interview

18 of the original 21 participants. Three students were not able to complete the interviews

because of scheduling conflicts with after-school activities. The interviews took place

over a two-week period at the end of the academic year. There was a one-week lag

between the end of the group activity and the beginning of the individual interviews.

**Interview Protocol**

The semi-structured interview protocol was based upon hope theory (Snyder et

al., 1991; Snyder et al., 2006), work-based learning (Kenny et al., 2010), and literature on

adolescent career development (Kenny et al., 2007). Specifically, questions in the

protocol drew upon Snyder et al.'s (1991) theoretical conceptualizations of planning,

motivation, and goal-setting behaviors and Snyder et al.'s (2006) discussion of relational

aspects of hope within a school context. The protocol also drew upon career development

literature related to adolescents' experiences in work-based learning related to motivation

and academic attitudes (Kenny et al., 2010) and perceptions of supports and barriers to

career attainment (Kenny et al., 2007). The studies by Kenny and colleagues (Kenny et

al., 2007; Kenny et al., 2010) are particularly relevant to the current study because of

their focus on low-income adolescents of color.

**Data Analysis**

In research using a phenomenological approach, data analysis is typically

conducted using interview transcripts where the questions asked all reflect the meaning

and essence of this phenomenon under investigation (Finlay, 2014). However,

phenomenology may also be used with other mediums of participant expression,

including written responses, such as journal entries (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, it was

permissible to use a phenomenological approach in this study to analyze the participants'

written responses. The data analysis steps described below follow a procedure developed

by Moustakas (1994) based upon work by Husserl (1964) and the Stevich and Colaizzi-

Keen method (Creswell, 2012). This procedure was used for the group writing activity

and the individual interviews. The writing samples and interviews were analyzed

separately. The term transcript is used below to describe data from the written activity

and the individual interviews.

The data analysis process began with bracketing exercises, known as the epoche, to make explicit the role of my previous experiences, beliefs, and assumptions about the phenomenon being studied.  The goal of this is to identify and make known, to the fullest extent possible, the researcher's preconceptions so that any reading of the participants' accounts reflects openness to their actual experiences rather than predetermined conclusions (Moustakas, 1994). Ahmed (2007) built upon this by arguing that researchers should focus on the participants' experiences and reflect on how their own social identities may be influencing how they understand the data. These exercises are also beneficial because they serve as a reminder to focus on the data as it unfolds rather than theory or underlying beliefs (Finlay, 2014).

I conducted the bracketing exercises prior to the data collection and continued to keep field notes as I interacted with the participants and observed the school setting. These bracketing exercises were done to critically reflect on my experiences and my assumptions about hope.  I initially noted the influence of previous research experience on adolescent career development and familiarity with literature on hope theory. I also noted my ontological assumptions that hope does exist for these students and will be reflected in positive experiences in the WBL program.   I expected some consistency with the literature related to goal-setting behaviors but also expected some areas of divergence along the lines of race and socio-economic status. I reflected on my identity as a White woman and clinical experiences with low-income students of color who lived in neighborhoods in the same urban setting.  I identified values consistent with the training I received in a social justice-oriented doctoral program in counseling psychology and reflected on the ways that these values may impact my experience s in the school setting

and with the participants. Throughout the data collection, I kept field notes on my reactions to participant responses and experiences in the community surrounding the school.

I began by reading and rereading the transcripts without initially attempting to identify key phrases within the interviews or themes across the interviews. The goal in this step is to take in the participants' interviews as holistic descriptions of their lives without attempting to deconstruct their accounts or explain their descriptions through a theoretical lens.   After the initial reading, I reread the transcripts and began organizing them into significant statements. This process, called horizontalization, required that all statements be taken verbatim and be considered in relation to the research questions. Thus, these statements were based upon the participants' own accounts rather than a perceived fit with theory. Initially, all statements were listed and treated equally regardless of the extent to which they may have replicated or overlapped with each other within a single transcript. Then these statements were condensed into a non-repetitive list (Moustakas, 1994).

The remaining stages focused on data transformation, which required moving past the surface-level descriptions to find deeper, richer meanings that capture the essence of the phenomenon. The transformation began with further analysis of each participant's account by grouping the significant statements into "meaningful units" or themes.  From these themes, I wrote descriptions of "what" the participants experienced (textual description) and how it was experienced (structural description).The former focused  on the ways the participants named and described their experiences (Creswell, 2012). The latter focused on the underlying mechanism of the phenomenon and how the participants

embody it in their daily lives through multiple contexts and frames of reference

(Moustakas, 1994).  Initially, a textual and structural description was written for each

participant. Then these descriptions were created across participants to capture

underlying commonalities in their experiences.  Once I  wrote the textual and structural

descriptions, I created a composite textual-structural description that represented an

integration of all of the participants' experiences into a universal account of hope as

embodied through everyday experiences in academic, relational, familial, spiritual, and

cultural contexts. Finally, I reviewed composite textual-structural descriptions for the

written activity and the interviews to determine underlying commonalities across

methods of data collection and to describe the essence of hope for the participants.

**Chapter 4: Results**

**Results for the Written Activity**

For the written activity, the participants were asked to imagine what it would be like to take a team of investigators on a tour of their communities. The participants were given the prompt to identify people, places, and things that bring them hope. The results of the data analysis yielded textual and structural descriptions for each participant. The textual descriptions captured what the participants experienced in their daily lives, and the structural descriptions reflected how participants experienced these things.  The collective results are presented below. Representative quotes from the participants were selected to illustrate the emergent themes. The names of the participants were changed to protect confidentiality. The themes detailed below demonstrate how the participants grounded hope in their everyday experiences as students. The participants also wrote about hope as something experienced more distally through reflection on national events or local history. These themes are not an exhaustive list of the participants' experiences, but rather speak to the underlying commonalities. The themes speak both to what the participants named as their lived experiences and the things that have gone unspoken. It is through the analysis of what is said and unsaid that it is possible to explore how participants embody their context and derive meaning from their lives (Ahmed, 2007).

**Composite Textual Description**

**Hope is Experienced Through School Success.** The participants most commonly focused on their experiences as students and wrote about their school as a place where students can succeed. The responses detailed how the school environment is associated

with future opportunity and possibility. The participants discussed possibility for their
own lives and more generally about other students attending high school. The quotes
featured below highlight this theme.

> Gabriel: I would show them schools, schools like this one. I would do so because
> the future of our nation is enrolled in these schools. Students are prepared for the
> future in college and beyond. This would leave them with the impression of [the
> city] and our hopes.

> Sofia: I would give them a tour of [my] high school because there are a few
> students who have hope and opportunities to achieve their dreams (As in what
> they want to be when they grow up). I'm sure there are many students that are
> very passionate about something and can inspire you.

> Maria: I would show the team of investigators my routine at school because
> everything I do here impacts my goals and future. My school is a very good
> support team for my hopes and goals for life, in school, and at work.

Notably absent from these writing excerpts is a discussion of how schools can be
a place of opportunity for disadvantaged students. The participants did not explicitly
make statements about race, ethnicity, social class, immigration status, or other forms of
identity that are shared by students at this high school. Available demographic data for
the school indicates that the majority of the students identify as racial or ethnic
minorities. Furthermore, the school primarily serves economically disadvantaged students
from local neighborhoods. Although it was not a focal point in the participant responses
here, statements made during the interviews suggest that the participants may think about

these forms of identity as a unifying characteristic among the student body. The focus in the participant interviews detailed below fell primarily on socioeconomic status within the context of educational opportunities upon graduating from high school. This suggests that the participants embodied a context where differential access to opportunity is a felt reality and a lived experience. Thus, a likely unifying characteristic for these participants is experiences of opportunity withheld, whether in previous educational settings or as members of disadvantaged groups in society as a whole.

## Composite Structural Description

**Hope is Experienced through Others' Resilience**. Many participants responded that hope can be found through resilience in the face of adversity. The data collection took place shortly after the Boston Marathon Bombings. This tragic event, which received national attention, was still an ongoing part of media reports when the participants completed this activity. None of the participants indicated that they were personally affected by the bombing or that they had witnessed the events. Rather, the students focused on what they have learned about the human spirit. The responses showed optimism in the face of tragedy and a belief in the systems in place to help the survivors.

Alexis: Recently, I looked to Copley where the marathon bombing happened for hope. The fact that only four people were killed and the majority of Boston was shut down shows hope for unity and faith within our legal system as well as one another.

Mateo: In light of recent events, I would show them the site of the 2013 marathon bombing and show them this place as a symbol of hope for the people of Boston.

Also, if I had to choose, I would show them the hospitals where people's lives were saved. Hospitals like Brigham and Women's and Boston Medical Center and Mass General. These places are symbols of hope to the people of Boston, and without them, many people would have lost their lives.

None of the participants discussed the more social and political aspects of the marathon bombings. For example, the participants did not discuss the city-wide shutdown that accompanied a police manhunt or the portrayal of immigrants by the news media. In discussing hope in reflecting on the lives of individuals, they did not discuss how xenophobia shaped a city's response to tragedy or permeated the lives of people of color, particularly through media portrayals (or the lack thereof). Although the participants described the hospitals as a beacon of hope, they did not discuss the barriers that some survivors may face in terms of the financial cost of their treatment, accessibility to quality health care, or rehabilitation of injuries. It may be that the participants were so focused on the immediate events surrounding the bombings because they embodied the media attention at the time, which focused on short-term consequences for the survivors.

**Hope is Experienced by Reflecting on United States History.** Another theme was the participants' reflection on the accomplishments and struggles of ancestors. In particular, the responses were focused on local history as a living entity that can be experienced as a member of the community rather than as a student reading a textbook. This community was broadly defined based upon living in a particularly geographical location. Some participants went as far as identifying their lives as the embodiment of past struggles.

Jada: First place I would take them would be to the Boston Commons. This is a location of hope and history because scholars and civilians from the past overcame challenges. I would then bring them to the State House because here is where a lot of history took place; people in the past overcame obstacles there. These locations bring me a sense of hope because it shows how history has survived, and preserved itself. Hope is something that you have within and constantly carry with you. This is why I would also show them Faneuil Hall because like other historical places, it is a place where as Americans we overcame challenges. Like a nation, we have hope, and hope allowed use to overcome the struggle, and it continues to help us fight the upcoming battle.

Many of these participants are the children of immigrants who came to the United States from countries in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. Among these participants, it was common to have extended family still residing in these countries and to have ongoing contact, such as trips during the summer. Thus, while the participants discussed historical lessons learned, it is most often in the context of their position as racial or ethnic minority students who identify as American while also embodying a connection to another culture that historically is not discussed in relation to stories of revolution in colonial Boston. The participants embraced these historical events as part of their identity as Americans and embodied these lessons as a guide for challenges within their own lives and society more broadly. What, however, is missing from these lessons is explicit telling of how the participants may have come to embody a complex and contradictory identity that reflects the oppression of minority groups and a desire to see themselves of part of the societal majority. Whether the participants

recognized experiences of privilege and discrimination in their own lives is unclear, but discussion of these things was absent in thinking about historical events. What permeates in these responses is the sense of mastery and confidence in one's abilities to rise to a challenge that was derived from things that past generations achieved.

**Composite Textual-Structural Description**

An integration of the textual and structural descriptions shows that participants experienced hope in proximal and distal contexts. The essence of hope in the proximal context was connected to the potential to achieve academically and a sense of possibility for the future. The participants discussed their own opportunities at their school as well as the opportunities available to others. The mechanism for that opportunity was most clearly identified at the organizational level with regard to the overall atmosphere. Participants did not identify specific staff members, although it was implied that caring individuals constitute the supportive environment.

At a more distal level, participants focused on a recent national event where the lessons learned through observations of others' resilience made them hopeful. It should be noted that the participants identified the collective hope of an entire city as being inspirational rather than focusing on individual stories of individuals triumphing over adversity. The students were not immediately impacted by the events themselves but felt personally moved and embodied the collective hope of a city.

Participants also discussed the impact of local history on their experiences of hope. Like the example described above, the participants did not identify a personal connection to these events. The participants did not identify specific familial ancestors or familial narratives about struggles for independence and freedom. However, they did feel

a personal connection to these events and embodied the ideals of freedom and independence as important in their own lives. Here again, the theme of collective hope resonates because the history described is a shared one on a communal scale that extends beyond the acts of any single individual. This sense of community and generational bonds did not include mention of race, ethnicity, social class, and other marginalized forms of identity.

When considering the experience of hope across these themes, it becomes apparent that hope rises above the achievements of individuals to encapsulate a communal experience that is value-laden but not necessarily goal-driven. While one may suppose that Boston had a goal of recovering from tragedy, this was not the focus of the written responses. Hope in this circumstance was process-driven. Similarly, historical events were relevant to these participants because of the struggles for independence and freedom rather than the fruits of victory. Again, it is implied that people fought injustice or waged war with a desired goal in mind, but it was values driving these goals that really captured the meaningfulness for the participants.

In conclusion, the integrated description shows that hope is experienced in proximal and distal contexts for participants as in their lives as students and community members. Hope is a belief in one's future and the future of others, which is fostered within supportive academic environments. In these discussions, hope is explicitly linked to goals. In contrast, hope when experienced as a community member is captured by bearing witness to others' ability to overcome adversity.  This suggests that hope is a multi-faceted experience that can be linked in individual goal-setting efforts but can also be embedded in communal and historical processes.

**Results for the Participant Interviews**

The interviews were analyzed using the same procedure as for the written activity. The collective textual and structural descriptions are presented below. Like the results of the written activity, the textual descriptions for the interviews capture what the participants experienced in their daily lives, and the structural descriptions reflect how participants experience these things. Representative quotes from the interviews are presented below to illustrate the emergent themes in the textual and structural descriptions. The names of the participants were changed to protect confidentiality. The results of the interviews build upon the themes from the writing activity and enrich these findings by further delineating the participants' experiences of hope in vocational, familial, cultural, and spiritual domains.

**Composite Textual Description**

The themes captured by the textual description included workplace support, motivation, financial challenges, inspiration, future success, and a caring school environment. The textual themes suggest that participants identified meaningful experiences across these domains and through relationships with parents, teachers, supervisors, and friends. The themes presented below shed light into the places where students draw meaning as they set goals for themselves, grapple with family expectations, think about the future, and reflect on their experiences at school.

**Support in the Workplace**. The workplace environment was described most often in terms of relationships with supervisors who provided care and support, sometimes in the form of a parenting role or mentoring role. When students discussed instrumental support, such as help with college applications, it coincided with relational support from

supervisors, people the students regarded as caring and interested in their well-being. The quote by Maria, presented below, illustrates how instrumental support and relational support help students to feel accepted in the workplace and work towards their career goals. The participants often described their supervisors as people who respected them and treated them as equals. As the quotes presented below show, the supervisors seemed to balance respect for the participants' abilities as workplace employees with their developmental needs.  The participants felt respected for their contributions to the workplace. The supervisors also saw them as something more than employees or students in need of work experience.

> Maria: My supervisors are very helpful. They know I want to be an OB/GYN when I get older. They know that, and one has actually helped me to get connected with the chairman of OB/GYN at the hospital. He's a mentor now thanks to her. I really like working there because they treat me with respect and as an adult.

> Daniel: My supervisor, I see her like my work mom I really enjoy her presence. I really appreciate her. She's done a lot for me. She's supported me. When I needed my license, she supported me. When I had prom coming up, she supported me…If I need advice or something like that I can just go to her. We talk a lot about what I want to do in life and where I want to be to two years, in ten years. We talk about the steps I can make to get there and the steps I should avoid.

Zach: It's like you are talking to people you have known for a long time, like your

family. It feels very family-oriented in my job because everyone is very open and

everyone is very kind.

The participants primarily discussed relationships with female supervisors. This

seems to be based on the supervisors who were most readily accessible and worked in

close contact with the students.  In the cases when men and women interacted daily with

the participants, male supervisors were also discussed as caring and interested in the

participants' personal lives. Male and female supervisors were equally as likely to help

students with academic goals, such as attending college, or discussing career ambitions.

Female supervisors were on occasion called mother figures by participants of both

genders. In contrast, male supervisors were not referred to as father figures, and male

participants were the only ones to refer to male supervisors as big brothers or older

friends. The participants did not explicitly discuss the race or ethnicity of the supervisors

or how social identities influenced conversations about college and careers.

**Motivation to Succeed.**  Participants discussed their how their motivation to succeed

was impacted by interactions with teachers, family members, and other students. The

teachers motivated students by challenging them and helping them reevaluate their skills.

They also confronted students who were not meeting their potential or putting forth

enough effort. Students generally viewed these interactions as helpful when recalling

them in the interview, but did not always agree with the teachers at the time the

conversations originally took place. The participants most often framed these

conversations related to their doubts about their ability to complete work or achieve

success in a particular class.  When the male participants discussed being challenged by

teachers, it was due to disappointing grades whereas the female students recalled conversations about putting in more effort. The participants were not explicitly asked to report their grade averages. Some of these participants did elsewhere in the interview as it related to academic goals. Among the students who did report their GPAs, there were not significant differences between male and female participants in level of achievement. Finally, the discussions between teachers and participants seemed to focus on individual effort and did not focus on social or political factors that could hinder or facilitate success.

> Daniel: Some of the teachers, they push you harder than you are actually working. I don't know what it is. It's like they have an eye for it. They can see your potential. It's like they're always saying, "Look, I know that you're better than this." You might be thinking to yourself, "What are you talking about? I've never done anything better than this. This is like me." But they see it, and they say, "You can do greater things. Do not limit yourself to just what you do," and that motivates you to actually want to do better things.

The participants also spoke about motivating each other to maintain good grades. They discussed a sense among friends and classmates that good grades were necessary for long-term academic goals, such as attending college. The way that the participants discussed motivating each other was through a shared sense of purpose within the larger community that the school setting created. The quotes below show the value that the participants placed on motivation as a fundamental part of relationships with peers.  The male and female participants discussed friendships as an important source of motivation with equal frequency. Their responses did not suggest differences between genders in

how the participants motivated each other or in the importance of motivation in relationships.

> Tamara: This is junior year. This is your last major year in high school. I feel like it's really important to just help people and push them through. That's what helps me, when I make a difference in other people's lives.

> Martin: My best friends motivate me a lot more than a usual friend. One of them, if she sees me slacking, she will point it out and say, "You're slacking. You got to pick it up." Most of my friends are people I've met here, and one of them is from around my house. He actually dropped out, but I'm trying to motivate him to get back into school.

Students also discussed their motivations to succeed being influenced by their parents' struggles to achieve academic goals or meaningful work lives. The participants discussed the ways that parents expected them to surpass their own levels of academic attainment by graduating from college. Parents engaged their children in conversation by discussing their past experiences and establishing that attending college was a collective goal for the entire family. The participants embodied these conversations and adopted the family's goals as their own. These conversations led students to set short-term goals to raise their GPAs and long-term goals to gain acceptance into college. Consequently, the knowledge that their families were so heavily invested in their academic success led many participants to feel pressure to succeed.  Female participants discussed this pressure more often than male participants.

Elena: I want to be the first one in my family to graduate from college…It's something big for me because both of my parents finished high school and went to college, but they didn't get past one semester. So it's really important to me and my family that I get through college. It's a big goal for my family that I finish college. It's a lot of pressure. I'm the only child, and I'm going to be the first one. If I don't do it, there's no one else who I going to do it for me.

Jasmin: If I was to go to college, I would be the first person to actually get a bachelor's degree out of my sisters. I know it's a lot of pressure; I would be the first one to actually walk at graduation and go to a four year college.

Carmen: We are from Haiti. The typical immigrant dream: having your child be really rich, really famous, supporting us. I'm just living out that dream. So they are always trying to show me the future. "You see where we are now, and you see where you want to be? You don't want to be like us. You don't want to struggle like we struggled. You have to work hard now so you can have it easier when you are older."

As these quotes demonstrate, the goal to achieve certain academic outcomes, such as graduating from college, were developed through ongoing conversations with family members, and participants came to embody their parents values through their goal setting efforts. Struggles to attain certain outcomes in life were described primarily in two ways. For most participants, their families immigrated from another country. While the participants did not speak at length about their families' struggles in the United States, financial strain emerged as the greatest source of stress. Not all participants identified as

children of immigrants. For others, life circumstances prevented family members, primarily parents, from achieving their goals. The children of immigrant parents discussed explicit conversations with parents about success after high school whereas other participants were mixed in their responses. Some recalled specific conversations while others put pressure on themselves to accomplish these goals.

**Academic Challenges.** All of the participants stated that they wanted to attend college. The most often cited barrier to achieving this goal was the potential financial cost. When the participants discussed college, they often stated that the choice of schools would be dependent upon the availability of financial aid packages or scholarships. Many of these participants discussed conversations with parents about the cost of college and feasible options. It seems that participants embodied these discussions and began to prepare themselves for how financial cost could impact their options for post-secondary education. When discussing their ideal colleges, participants described affordability as an important characteristic alongside such factors as size, location, religious affiliation, and quality of student life. The participants did not harbor negativity about the potential limits imposed on them because of the financial cost of post-secondary education. Instead, they focused on the opportunity to attend college and what it would mean.

> Alonso: Growing up, one of the things I heard most was, "Son don't be like us. Go to school, get your education, and be much greater than us." I see that. One of my fears for myself is not having enough money to go to college. Not having enough money to go to where I want to go. It scares me because in this school, all the students, we share one thing. We are not rich. We see the struggle inside our

homes. At the same time, that's one of my challenges: having the fear of repeating and disappointing my parents.

Martin: In everyday life, some of the barriers are family issues. Most of the time in my house, it's money problems. There's always money problems when it comes to my parents because they have to pay for my school, and they also have to pay bills. That's stressful enough. Usually I don't like asking them for money because I know they already have trouble. I know when I worked over the summer; I actually gave my mom my first paycheck to help her out. That's my life, and that's how school goes.

Leah: We talk about tuition and the financial aid we can get. We mostly talk about the things we can afford as opposed to the things we want…It's just kind of brought down to that fact that if I were to get no financial aid whatsoever, could I go to this school? That's kind of like how my family has narrowed it down.

**Inspiration.** Participants discussed some future goals in terms of the inspiration they received from others, such as family members, teachers, and peers. Although similar to motivation in some ways, inspiration was not explicitly tied to specific tasks, such as earning an A on an assignment. Instead, it provided a more global influence on how the participants thought about academics and a path for life. Across responses, the inspiring people had similar qualities. These people were described as hardworking and caring. This care was most often described as a commitment to others, whether in an everyday interactions or as a career choice.  Female participants were more likely to discuss inspiring family members, who were unanimously identified as their mothers. Male

participants were as likely as female participants to discuss non-family members. When the male participants did discuss family members, they identified their fathers or older brothers.

> Zach: Seeing someone in my class help someone they don't even talk to, making someone smile inspires me to do better for myself. And then knowing that I'm really close to the people I work with, like the ones I help all the time, that inspires me…I'm the type of person where I want to do something for someone. It inspires me to do better for them and constantly do things.

> Alonso: Ms. S., I don't have her anymore, for junior year, she's a pre-calc teacher. Every morning, she's here at six o'clock. She chooses to be here. I think that shows you dedication, at least for me. That inspires me.

> Nia: I am the only child, and I live with my mom. So we're constantly together. She didn't finish college, but she does work. She has been trying, and she has been raising me on her own. So, she's really inspiring.

> Jasmin: My mom is a social worker. Because my family is domestic violence survivors, she helps people who are domestic violence survivors or homeless. When I see her do that, it inspires me because a lot of people love her for that. They appreciate her.

**Future Success.** Another common theme was the participants' thoughts about future success. Although material success was mentioned, it was not common. Success was defined in terms of financial independence and work as a source of meaning and enjoyment. These ways of viewing the future were commonly associated with knowing

that family members, particularly parents, struggled to find meaningful, well-paying employment. For many of the participants, they made a direct connection between the opportunities available to their family members and the quality of their work experiences. These discussions of opportunity were largely framed by knowledge of parents' experiences as immigrants with limited possibility for career attainment. These parents immigrated to the United States and sought employment here but were unable to find high paying or satisfying jobs. Among participants whose parents were not immigrants, the common experience centered on knowledge that educational opportunities never materialized or were lost. The participants did not discuss educational opportunity of the lack thereof in terms of discrimination that their parents faced.  Becoming wealthy was mentioned by a few participants, but it, was not a common aspiration. Additionally, expected income was not explicitly identified by the participants as a defining factor in choosing among potential careers. Rather than being wealthy, students desired to live comfortably. In these cases, achieving financial security was almost always tied back to the families' financial burdens. The common desire for independence was framed in financial terms, such as described below. The participants did not describe independence as a desire to separate from their families.

> Maria: Independence is big for me. I want to be able to provide for myself and not struggle the way my mom and our family have in the past.

> Alexis: I would just like to be an independent person, and in the future I'd like to see myself owning my own house, not having to get support from my mom.

Tamara: The way I want to live my life is to go to work and do what I want to do and be happy doing it. Whether it's making a lot of money or not making a lot of money. I see my mom every day go off to work, and she does her job. She goes to work and likes it because of the people there, but she's not doing exactly what she wants to do. She goes to work for a paycheck. I want to go to work because it makes me happy.

Carmen: Enjoying my job. Not even calling it my job. Calling it my career. Loving what I do every day. I just want to love what I do. A lot of people don't love what they do. They just do it for the money…but if I can love what I can do, it will make it that much more meaningful.

**Caring School Environment.** The participants overwhelmingly described their school environment as a caring place. Although participants identified specific teachers or staff members in some cases, they often spoke about the school broadly in terms of the atmosphere and shared goals among the faculty and administration. Participants like Antonia directly linked the caring environment to tangible outcomes, such as SAT preparation. Other participants, like Jasmin, spoke more generally about the school and her overall impression of the teachers' shared mission to help the students achieve something in their lives. The idea of opportunity was prominent in the responses. The participants focused on the opportunities available to them through their relationships with teachers. Only one participant, Antonia, made a specific comparison to peers in public schools.  Overall, the participants who stated that they attended public schools before enrolling at this high school did not explicitly compare the current atmosphere to experiences in the past. Finally, opportunity was framed within the context of the

relational and instrumental support to individuals or cohorts. The participants did not

frame discussions of opportunity in broader, social or political terms.

> Antonia: I compare myself to my friends who go to public school. The
>
> community here is more united. The people care more about you. Typically, in the
>
> college process, I compare and contrast myself with my friends. They aren't really
>
> getting much help. They were going to talk about SATs in September or October.
>
> For us, that would have been late. We already started the process. We took the
>
> SATs and ACTs. I'm really grateful that I have this whole team helping us.

> Jasmin: They [the teachers] really care about what they're doing. They are about
>
> what they teach. They're very passionate about what they teach. It's not just a
>
> paycheck. It really isn't. At the end of the day, it's just about what they want to
>
> teach and what they want us to learn…They want us to do better. Or maybe they
>
> just want us to do what they could have done. They want us to realize what
>
> opportunities they had or maybe the opportunities they did not have when they
>
> were students at their own school.

## Composite Structural Description

The composite structural description describes how participants experience things

in their daily lives and captures these commonalities through representative quotes. It

complements the textual description by speaking to the underlying mechanisms that

helped the participants to perceive these experiences and ascribe meaning. Hope emerged

as the underlying mechanism by which the participants experienced daily events and

thought about the future.  All of the participants described the experience of feeling hope

and hopelessness. Hope was described as a process rather than an endpoint or outcome. It was dynamic, shifting entity that emerged from hopelessness in familial and academic domains. It was nurtured through relationships with others, such as teachers and parents, or belief in a higher power.

**Hope and Hopelessness in the Academic Domain**. Hope as an experience fostered through relationships was strong throughout the interviews, with participants identifying teachers, parents, and supervisors as people who fostered hope.  Hope, as defined in Snyder's (1991) theory, is present with students emphasizing goals, motivation, and planning. The discussions of hope were not limited to goal-oriented behaviors, though. Students also described hope as a learning experience and a chance to reflect on the value of education.  The quote by Lorenzo captures how students found hope.

> Lorenzo: When I talk to my supervisor about being in communications, it sparked the light for me. It was the light at the end of the tunnel for me. It was like I felt like I was going into communications. But I didn't really know anything about it. I always wanted to work as a broadcaster. He shed a light on things. It was like getting a perspective on how it's going to work. That gave me the hope that I needed.

> Chloe: There was this one point last year. I was done with school and these classes. All of the teachers were giving us so much work, and I thought, "I can't do this anymore. I went to Ms. K. She helped me figure it out. I had to. At that point I was giving up. I couldn't do it anymore. I was going to take C's and D's.

Then she said, "You are going to graduate and finish strong." You are right. We figured it out from there.

Participants often spoke of hope and hopelessness as linked, with hope emerging from hopelessness. Hopelessness was generally described as an upsetting and even debilitating state, but students overwhelmingly identified it as a temporary one that could be overcome with enough effort. The participants described hopelessness about their academic goals at times when they were not working hard enough in their classes. At these points, the participants saw low grades that reflected a lack of effort. Hope, in contrast, developed through hard work and was maintained through continued success. Students who became hopeful often observed their efforts pay off in the form of higher grades. The participants did not find hope alone. They described relationship with teachers and parents as catalysts for perspective shifts that helped them to achieve higher grades and set new goals.   The participants did not explicitly tie feelings of hope or hopelessness with prejudice or discrimination, although some participants, such as Martin, did frame it in terms of opportunity.  The discussion remained primarily focused on the interplay of individual and relational factors, such as self-efficacy and social support.  It appears that the participants embodied messages about hard work and ability, and used these conversations with parents and teachers to achieve feelings of hope.

Antonia: My sophomore year, I struggled to know how to study, so I lost hope that I could get good grades. It would have been downhill through my high school years. With my teachers' help and everyone else supporting me, they helped me to study and to get better. As time went by and my grades improved, I got hopeful that I could do better and overcome any boundaries. Just because I failed once,

didn't mean I was going to fail throughout life. Just to overcome that challenge,
ever since then whenever I see myself falling back, I do have hope in myself that I
will do better as long as I try harder.

Lorenzo: It was probably around junior year when I started to do badly in classes.
Around that time I was just like, "Oh man am I going to do it? Am I going to
actually graduate this time?" But towards the end of the year when I made it to
senior year, that was a kick in the butt.

Martin: Seventh grade wasn't my best academic moment in my life. I started off
the first half of the year with all F's. What really opened my eyes was a parent-
teacher conference, where my mom went to every class, and she told me that she
heard "F" from every teacher. She gave me this speech I always hear, "Oh, I came
to this country for you guys, for you guys to have a better future." Then she said I
was a disappointment, and she started crying. For me, I could never see my mom
cry, and then when she said the word disappointment, it really hit me hard. I was
like, "Wow, I messed up. What am I going to do?" I stayed after school every day
until I got my grades up. I saw there's hope for me.

**Hope and Belief in a Higher Power.** Hope was associated with belief in a higher power
for many participants. The emphasis on faith found in the participants' responses is not
surprising given that they attend a Catholic high school, with many explicitly identifying
as Catholic in their interviews. Hope in this context was not dependent on
accomplishments and did not require proof. This is a departure from discussions of hope
elsewhere, particularly in the academic domain where goal-setting behaviors were

common. As the quote below shows, many participants described hope as an emotional

anchor that allowed them to face uncertainty and fear. Hope through faith was not an

outcome nor was it necessarily a process. It was a state of being derived from faith that

was so implicit to the participants' understanding of the world that it did not require

justification.  When describing hope, participants generally spoke about a deeply personal

relationship with a higher power. Elsewhere in the interviews, the participants discussed

the Catholic mission of their high school and the importance of attending religious

services with family members. It is possible that these personal relationships with a

higher power reflect an embodiment of organized religious practices, but the quotes do

not elucidate this possibility.

> Zach: I try not to hope a lot because of growing up in my family situation. It's
>
> kind of hard to hope because a lot of things I hoped for never came true. I base
>
> hope off faith. I really just believe that something good will happen. So, I have to
>
> base it off faith in myself. So I really just have faith in God. He wouldn't do
>
> anything that would put an end to me. I guess I could be hopeful…Hope is the
>
> feeling that when all else fails, when there's nothing left, when your back is
>
> against the wall, when you are in the dark, when you can't see the light at the end
>
> of the tunnel, [hope] is if you keep walking forward, you'll see, and the light will
>
> find you. Hope can keep you going.

**Hopelessness in Personal Lives.** Participants also discussed hopelessness in their

personal lives. For many, a feeling of hopelessness emerged when participants

experienced problems within their families. These relationships, which were so often

described as nurturing and supportive, could also breed hopelessness. That hopelessness

was also associated with powerlessness to change a distressing situation within their families related to things like financial struggles, conflict between parents, and the loss of a loved one. The participants discussed parents as people who foster hope in the academic domain by providing support but also identified times when parents contributed to feelings of hopelessness in their personal lives. Parents helped their children by believing in their academic futures but also contributed to feelings of hopelessness when they struggled in their personal lives. The participants did not explicitly discuss the ways that parents contributed to a mix of hope and hopelessness in their lives. Like experiences in the academic domain, hopelessness in relationships was described as temporary. However, unlike hopelessness about one's academic future, the solution was not always as clear. Hard work and effort, which were so seminal to finding hope in academic pursuits, did not have such effects in interpersonal relationships. What did seem to help was to reflect on the situation and refocus energy elsewhere. For some participants, they shifted their attention to academics as a way to mend hopelessness whereas others found fulfillment in extracurricular activities. While some relationships were eventually repaired and even strengthened, some participants indicated that their change in perspective allowed them to accept situations, such as divorce, and move on.

> Elena: Well, thinking about my grandmother, she did pass away. By the time she was sick, it was a sad time for my mom. I felt hopeless in the sense that I couldn't do anything. I was only 14 or 15. I couldn't' really have a job. I had just entered high school. My mother was a single parent. Seeing her fall behind made me feel hopeless because there was nothing I could initially do to help her. I couldn't pay bills. As much as I tried to cheer her up, the reality is that someone died. At that

point it was hard for me to get any sense of hope and overcome any challenges. I never gave up trying to cheer up my mom. Anything she said, I always listened. I continued to try to do better in school because she always told me that school is my priority. "Don't worry about trying to pay the bills. That's not your problem. Don't think about getting a job. As long as you are getting the education and getting good grades." Seeing my mother overcome the challenge of my grandmother's death helped me to do better for her and my grandmother too.

Leah: There was a little bit [of hopelessness] during my parents' divorce, but it wasn't like there was no hope at all. It's that there wasn't as much there anymore because the whole ideal of what I believed a family was had been shattered before me. That's when I felt like there was less hope…Once I've been able to come through high school and join my youth group, I feel like the hope that was taken away from me has slowly been restored.

## Composite Textual-Structural Description

An integration of the textual and structural descriptions showed that participants experienced hope in vocational, academic, and personal domains. The unifying link across these themes was supportive relationships that existed in both proximal and distal contexts. The students most heavily emphasized relationships with family members, teachers, and workplace supervisors, as influencing motivation and goal-setting. Closer inspection, though, shows distinct mechanisms that contribute to these positive outcomes through relationships. Teachers directly influenced students by providing structure and support in achieving academic goals and motivating students to succeed, even at times

when the students harbored self-doubt or pessimism about the future. In these cases, the relationship itself was strong enough to create dissonance and willingness to try despite obstacles or fear of failure. To a lesser extent, although still significant, students felt inspired by hardworking teachers, which deepened their bonds with these individuals and commitment to their own goals.

Relationships with family members influenced students to achieve their goals in two ways. First, participants were motivated by direct conversations on future goals and family struggles. Participants recounted times when their parents challenged them to be better students in order to reach their potential and also to fulfill the potential of the family. This was most often discussed in terms of challenges overcome or opportunities denied to family members, especially parents, who could not pursue higher education. This message was so strong, in fact, that many participants developed a goal of attending college because it was a shared vision for the family. Students discussed wanting to graduate from high school and earn a degree because it would fulfill a family aspiration. Often, these aspirations were forged within the context of immigration to the United States, which was often presented as a dual-edged sword. The participants, children of immigrants, knew that the United States offered them more opportunities than the places where their families immigrated from, but the United States also seemed to deny opportunities to the parents who could not pursue educational opportunities or find a meaningful job. The result, as many participants observed, was living at great financial disadvantage that was for many at the forefront of conversations about college.  This also undergirds the theme of future success, which was focused on living comfortably as opposed to displaying markers of great material wealth. Furthermore, the participants

seemed to embody their parents' struggles to find meaningful work, and developed goals to have careers of some value to themselves and others. Here again, the focus was not on careers that provide the greatest financial advantage or material gain, but rather on careers that provided personal fulfillment and helped others.

The participants also identified a relationship with a higher power, whether through organized religion or spirituality, that grounded them and provided comfort in times of distress. Unlike relationships with teachers and family members, faith in a higher power was not explicitly linked to goal-setting or motivation to succeed. It did, however, seem to be indirectly linked to future orientation by helping participants have positive outlooks about their lives. Among the participants who identified as religious or spiritual, only a subset explicitly discussed sharing practices such as praying or attending religious services with family members. For these participants, it seems that a relationship with God is forged within the context of a familial belief system. Similarly, participants stated that they chose to attend their high school because of its Catholic mission, but they did not explicitly describe Catholic values when describing supportive relationships with teachers and peers.

**Essence of Hope Across the Written Activity and Interviews**

The common theme across the written activity and the interviews was academic opportunity made possible through education. In the written activity, the students discussed the school environment in broad terms as a place where students strive for their goals and believe that future success is possible. The written activity responses did not include mention of specific people or experiences, but rather focused on the general presence of the school in the students' lives. In the interviews, students spoke about

relationships with teachers and peers as sources of support and motivation to achieve academic goals. Teachers were also in some cases sources of inspiration because of their hard work and dedication. The work study component of the school was also discussed, albeit within the context of supportive relationships where supervisors or mentors helped the participants to reach their goals.

The discussion of opportunity in the interviews was more strongly linked to the participants' personal lives and their families' experiences. In this context, opportunity was experienced in two ways. On one hand, the students showed cautious optimism about the opportunities available to them. This optimism was tempered by knowledge of their families' financial struggles. Opportunity was also represented as something denied to family members, which often motivated the participants to achieve their goals.

The results of the written activity and the interviews both suggested that participants embodied their relational, social, cultural, and historical contexts. In the written activity, the participants embodied experiences of past generations that fought for independence in the colonial period and applied this to their own lives. In the interviews, the participants embodied the struggles of their families and the goals set for them. In this sense, goals were not individually defined nor individually achieved. They embodied their families' struggles and aspirations.

The participants did not emphasize race, ethnicity, social class, gender, or other forms of social identity in the written activity. The individual interviews did show that participants discussed the effects of financial disadvantage on their expectations for college. They also discussed how their families' decisions to come to the United States

has affected their views of education and future goals. Although differences between male and female participants were noted for some themes, the participants did not discuss how gender has impacted academics, future goals, or opportunity. The participants did not discuss experiences with prejudice and discrimination nor did they state that systemic barriers could limit their opportunities.

Overall, the written activity and the interview results demonstrated that hope is bound by context as defined in personal, cultural, social, and historical terms. The results showed that the experience of hope is often shared with others, such as family members, teachers, friends, and workplace supervisors. At times, it must also be nurtured by others when students doubt their abilities, feel overwhelmed, or strive for a goal. Hope is also found through a higher power and felt as a member of a community. That community may be described as the daily school environment or defined in the aftermath of tragedy. Whether in written expression or the spoken word, the participants experienced hope in their daily lives and believed in its power to carry them throughout their lives.

**Chapter 5: Discussion**

This study explored the experiences of hope among a group of low income students of color participating in a work-based learning program in an urban high school in the Northeast.  The goal was to build upon existing knowledge on WBL outcomes by studying the daily experiences of the students. The phenomenological design of the study allowed the participants to move past pre-determined response options on scales to elaborate on hope as they experienced it in their daily lives.  Hope was lost, found, and strengthened through connections to supportive others, whether these relationships were defined proximally or distally. Participants experienced hope in a variety of ways as an outcome, process, and spiritual state.

This study employed a phenomenological approach that uncovered what the participants described as hope and how they experienced it in their daily lives. The results reflect the common experience of hope across the sample and how the participants embodied the relational, social, and cultural contexts both in what they described and in their unspoken, taken-for-granted assumptions. Consistent with methodological recommendations (Creswell, 2012) and previous research with low income students of color (McIntyre, 2000), the data collection entailed a written activity and individual interviews. The written activity asked participants to identify the people, places, and things that brought them hope in their communities. The individual interviews, which followed the written activity, were semi-structured in nature and included questions about daily experiences in WBL, career and academic goals, relational support, challenges, personal definitions of hope, and experiences with hopelessness. The findings suggest that hope is culturally embedded and contextually bound in a way that is more nuanced

and dynamic than what is typically revealed in quantitative studies. Thus, the results of this study delineate an experience of hope that builds upon existent empirical trends and illuminates new and promising avenues for application and further study.

**Hope as Experienced in the Current Study**

The participants' experiences reflect a contextually-bound model of hope that is embedded in community and school characteristics, relational supports, spiritual practices, and cultural values. Individual goals did not exist in isolation but rather reflected the dynamic interplay of larger, interconnected systems that can buttress or undermine motivation and planning. The participants described hope within their communities as witnessing resilience in the face of adversity. This adversity, whether defined as historical or current, showed that participants felt connected to something larger than themselves, a common experience that held throughout the results and undergirds this contextual model of hope. For example, the participants reflected on the events of the Boston Marathon bombing, choosing to focus on how the community rallied together after the tragedy. None of these participants identified personal connections to the events but rather were moved by witnessing resilience in aftermath of this tragedy. . A similar theme emerged in how the participants drew upon historical events to describe hope within the community. Their families were not necessarily instrumental in these historical events, such as serving in a war, but the participants drew upon and embodied the resilience in the face of adversity that others showed. The results suggest that hope is something that can be embodied by being a member of a community. These findings challenge the individualistic nature of hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991) and its emphasis on concrete goals and tangible outcomes that individuals work towards through a series

of cognitive appraisals. In the case of the Marathon bombing, the participants did not set goals for themselves or engage in planning. Even when Snyder has discussed communal forms of hope (e.g., Snyder & Feldman, 2000), the emphasis has been on the benefits of hopeful individuals helping to motivate others. What is seen from the participants' experience is something entirely different than this assumption. They described hope in a communal form that truly unites a community and represents something that transcends goal setting as conventionally defined by existing theory, which does not acknowledge the ways that hope is embodied through participation in something greater than oneself. Although hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991) does not account for individuals as members of communities, qualitative studies of hope have begun to explore this possibility. For example, a study by Isaacs and Savahl (2014) found that lack of hope in one's community had detrimental effects on young people in Cape Town, South Africa, who struggled to find meaning in their lives. Here, the opposite holds true. Hope in one's community has enduring positive effects. One of the important things to note before leaving this point is that the participants embodied a community that rallied around each other to overcome tragedy rather than a community that showed prejudice towards immigrants and Muslims in the aftermath of the bombing.

The participants described their school as a caring environment where academic success seemed within reach. In this case, the participants embodied an educational environment that was supportive and nurturing, and they lived out the possibilities in their daily interactions with teachers and peers. This suggests an underlying interconnectedness among students and the staff. The impact of individual relationships, which is detailed below, is a likely contributor for this interconnectedness, but it is also

likely that institutional factors contributed as well given that the participants discussed an overall atmosphere where they felt valued by a dedicated staff. Furthermore, this embodiment of caring and supportive educational and vocational contexts stand in contrast to societal messages that low income students of color typically face in their daily lives and may come to embody through school disengagement or drop outs.   These findings are consistent with trends elsewhere in the literature on hope in racial and ethnic minority students.  Adelabu (2008) found that African American students in urban and rural environments who reported high levels of hope had higher levels of academic achievement and a greater sense of belonging than counterparts who reported low levels of hope. Although the level of academic achievement among the participants in this study is unknown, they were all successfully enrolled in a college preparatory high school known for a high rate of college placement. Riele (2010) also recognized the role of the educational context, suggesting that hope can be fostered at an institutional level to develop a particular value set that can be infused into daily interactions between students and teachers.

Supportive and nurturing relationships with parents were commonly identified among the participants as helpful during challenging academic periods. Parents also had an ongoing role in motivating the participants to succeed when students were working confidently towards their goals. They did so by helping their children to put these goals in perspective. The participants discussed the experience of being part of families where relatives have already experienced the effects of limited opportunities. This was often, although not exclusively, discussed within the context of immigrant families. Students from non-immigrant families discussed comparable experiences of limited opportunity

among family members related to long-standing poverty acting on family system.  In this

sense, the participants embodied a familial context marked by disappointment, and their

goal setting reflected not only attempts to gain mastery but also a desire to overcome an

oppressive societal context. These findings support previous research on the role of

parental support on the academic functioning of low-income students of color (Kenny et

al., 2007) and also extend how parental support is conceptualized within hope theory.

Snyder et al. (1991) drew upon attachment theory to outline the ways that ongoing

supportive interactions with parents during the formative years help young people to

develop trait hope. The current findings suggest that it is when ongoing nurturance

throughout adolescence is coupled with awareness of barriers to success that hope can

come into being. This phenomenon cannot be fully explained within the framework that

hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991) provides. For the participants in this study and their

families, hope has been forged, sustained, stripped away, and renewed within a context of

urban poverty and ongoing marginalization. More than just helping the participants to

utilize skills for planning and agency, parental relationships may also help to raise

awareness of potential systemic or structural challenges that potentially stand in the way

of post-secondary education and a meaningful work life. Thus, secure attachment may be

coupled with consciousness-raising to foster goal pursuit in some contexts. This

possibility is vital to expanding hope theory to the lives of marginalized youth because it

suggests that the ways that parents and children form meaningful connections is rooted

within a societal context where differential opportunity exists and effects the daily lives

of families.  This is consistent with Riele's (2010) argument that relationships with

parents and other supportive adults exist outside of the lens provided by attachment

theory. It also supports Riele's premise that hope is best understood as a socially mediated construct that reflects particular community, political, and cultural contexts. In this sense, fostering hope, especially in adverse times, should take into account micro and macro level factors, starting with the quality of the relationship and extending into the larger social milieu.

Hope as a relational process with non-parent adults was also a common experience. Within the school setting, the participants experienced support from teachers who pushed students to recognize their strengths, overcome self-doubts, and develop their academic abilities. Teachers also motivated students by inspiring them to achieve their goals, which is consistent with previous findings by Kenny et al. (2007). The participants described ways that witnessing the teacher's commitment to their jobs motivated them to continue reaching for their academic goals. This is consistent with work by Snyder et al. (2006) on the role of teachers in actively supporting student goals, but also extends their work by showing how the participants embodied the values of the teachers they admired. These participants were not only influenced by what the teachers did and said in their conversations but were also inspired by how the teachers carried themselves throughout the school year.  These findings expand hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991) by showing ways that relationships are fundamental to how participants experience hope in their daily lives and challenge the notion that the benefit of relationships with non-parental adults, such as teachers, is in the ability of these interactions to foster goal pursuit through planning and agency (Snyder et al., 2006). While the participants' experiences certainly did reflect efforts by teacher to help them work towards their goals, these relationships were not simply a means to an end, namely

successful goal pursuit, as is often the case in the ways that student-teacher interactions are described in hope theory (Pedrotti et al., 2008). Although the results do not make explicit the ways that these student-teacher relationships embody the larger social and political context of urban education, the participants lived experiences do make known relational dynamics with peers and supportive adults that are unspoken and taken for granted in hope theory (Snyder et al.,1991).

Workplace supervisors played a similar role as supportive adult figures that helped the participants to think about their future goals and develop career-related skills. Whether described as supervisor, mentor, or mother-figure, it was clear that participants saw benefits from these interactions in part because they felt respected and valued. The participants embodied a relational context in their workplaces where supervisors took a personal interest in the students' lives beyond the typical responsibilities of a supervisory relationship.  What the participants experienced through this investment was opportunities for career exploration, such as through job shadowing, and support for their academic success that supplemented what was already embodied in relationships with teachers. It also created a vocational context for these students that was experienced as full of potential to contribute to the company. These results are consistent with findings elsewhere in the literature on the role of workplace supervisors in helping students to become future-oriented and interested in career possibilities. For example, Kenny et al. (in press) found that supervisors were committed to building meaningful relationships with students and actively sought ways to help them to think about their career futures. What can be taken from these results is that support from supervisors helped these participants to explore career possibilities, learn about corporate settings, and develop a

positive sense of self as someone who contributes to the work setting. In the current study, support from workplace supervisors is experienced along with support from teachers, parents, and peers and appears to provide supplemental value in preparing students for their career futures. However, it did not appear to be the primary mechanism driving academic achievement for these students, and the WBL program provided support in conjunction with a caring school environment and committed parents.

These findings suggest avenues for expansion of work hope (Juntunen & Wettersten, 2006) to make relationships more integral to how we understand vocational goal-setting. The results are consistent with work by Diemer and Blustein (2007) on vocational hope in the lives of marginalized youth. Although similar in some ways, vocational hope is theoretically distinct from work hope because it makes explicit the role of the social context, which is often experienced in oppressive ways. Consistent with Diemer and Blustein's (2007) work, the current findings suggest the participants embodied a work environment characterized by meaningful connection within a societal context where marginalized youth are so often disengaged from career exploration and feel the effects of foreclosed vocational options. Finally, the participants' experiences suggest that successful WBL programs do more than simply facilitate skill development but also create an environment where the students feel valued and connected to supervisors who are charged with preparing them for life after high school.  However, it is unclear from the findings if this support directly impacted tangible outcomes related to academic achievement. Nonetheless, an apparent characteristic of a successful WBL program are committed supervisors who nurture their supervisees and take a holistic view of their development (c.f., Kenny, in press).

A connection between hope and belief in a higher power was also apparent, with participants describing their faith in spiritual and religious terms. Unlike goal pursuit, which is fundamentally understood in terms of tangible outcomes, hope through a relationship with a higher power was not described by participants as dependent upon proof and could not be explained within motivational terms. For these participants, hope through a higher power was neither a process nor an outcome. They described it as a component of their identity and a lens for understanding the world. Hope within this context was also a source of strength and an anchor, something that could buoy participants in difficult times. In this sense, hope was described as a type of reserve that participants draw upon through their relationship with a higher power. Hope was neither dependent upon agency nor planning. In the absence of planning and motivation, hope was fundamental to how the participants embodied family hardships and coped with adversity. Hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991) does not account spirituality nor does it allow for experiences of hope that are lived outside the parameters of goal pursuit. Therefore, these results are vital for understanding how the lay person defines hope and draws meaning from daily experiences.  These current findings are consistent with research findings on at-risk youth in Cape Town, South Africa who used prayer as a coping strategy and demonstrated adaptive levels of hope when faced with community violence (Isaacs     Savahl, 2014). The results also support a small but promising line of research on hope and religious identity that has suggested that hope as defined by a belief in a higher power and adherence to religious teachings is beneficial for mental health (Rye, Wade, Fleri, & Kidwell, 2013). This literature most often focuses on psychotherapy processes or physical health outcomes (Rye et al., 2013) but the results of this study

suggest that academic functioning and career planning may also be avenues for further research.

Discussions of hope cannot be fully understood without also considering hopelessness since a phenomenological understanding of hope draws into awareness the dialectical nature of phenomenon (Finlay, 2014). The participants described hope and hopelessness primarily in academic and familial terms. Academically, hopelessness was associated with a lack of focus, few goals, and self-doubts. Participants remembered times when they were not achieving their goals and did not know if these goals were possible. They described hopelessness as they thought about their academic futures. Participants described supportive relationships with teachers and parents as helping them to move beyond hopelessness and begin to believe in themselves and the possibility of future success. Relationships with family members, which were so often described by the participants as a foundation for hope, strength, and inspiration, could also be a source of hopelessness. The participants described hopelessness in witnessing familial break ups or parents' personal struggles. Although devastating, these feelings of hopelessness were overwhelmingly described as temporary, as the participants found meaning through religion, spirituality, volunteerism, or academics to recover from the depths of hopelessness. This experience of hope and hopelessness within the relational context adds depth to how hope is understood and points to the dynamic nature of hope within a temporal context. Just as relationships are not static entities, hope is not fixed but rather contradictory and ambivalent at times.

Although this was a largely unspoken process among these participants, it appears that the events that tested their determination and caused emotional pain also

strengthened their resolve and helped them to gain greater perspective. In this respect, the

participants did not discuss hope as something that could be taken away permanently, but

they did recognize it as something forged through difficult moments in their lives. Much

like the discussion of hope at the community level, hope was not defined as the absence

of struggle, but rather as the process of rising above challenges. Whereas challenges in

the academic domain had clear solutions, adverse events within families, such as divorce

or illness, were not always so easily solved, and the process of overcoming these

challenges was neither necessarily linear nor goal-directed. The ways that the participants

experienced hopelessness falls outside of the scope of hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991).

However, this is not entirely surprising given the results of a study by Tong et al. (2010),

which found that participants defined hope for events within and outside of their control

and in situations where a plan of action was undetermined. The experience of hope

described in the Tong et al. (2010) study is consistent with how these participants

experienced hopelessness.  Furthermore, the current study adds to the previous findings

by providing a bridge between hopelessness and hope in how the participants described

their coping strategies.

Collectively, these findings showed how the participants experienced hope in

their daily lives and across roles and contexts. Hope was experienced in relationships

with others and a belief in a higher power. The participants embodied their families'

struggles and membership in a community. These findings show partial support for hope

theory but also suggest that goal pursuit is varies across contexts and within cultural

value systems.

**Hope as Goal Pursuit: Towards a Contextual Model**

The model of hope that emerged from the current study places goal pursuit within a larger social and cultural context where pathways and agency can be understood as socially mediated processes that explain part, but not all, of the ways that the participants experience hope. This study, much like other qualitative studies before it (Isaacs Savahl, 2014; Nalkur, 2009), indicates that the way that participants describe hope is grounded in relationships and embodied experiences within their schools and communities. It is something that is experienced through direct interactions with others, through a spiritual connection to a higher power, and through witnessing of significant events. These ways of experiencing hope are particularly important in considering the applicability of theory because the results suggested that goal pursuit was not always a fundamental process in experiencing hope. This provides support for criticisms of how Snyder et al. (1991) conceptualize hope and suggests that the distinction between hope and optimism is not entirely clear (Tennen et al., 2002). Overall, these participants embodied the relational processes, community characteristics, family experiencess, and cultural values that ultimately delineated how they defined their goals and gained awareness of the challenges they faced.

Hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991) has been criticized for its individualistic nature (Riele 2010), and its applicability to the lives of people of color has been called into question (Pedrotti et al., 2008). Interventions aimed at increasing levels of hope tend to focus on ways to optimize planning an agency so that individual goals can become achievable through ongoing appraisals and readjustments (Snyder    Lopez, 2004). Pedrotti et al. (2008) suggest that group differences related to personal choice and value

sets are likely to contribute to difficulties in identifying and achieving individual goals. Even when hope is discussed as a communal construct (Snyder    Feldman, 2000), the assumption is that hopeful individuals should work together to help each other reach their individual goals. A problematic aspect of Snyder's (1991) theory and later explications (e.g., Snyder    Feldman, 2000) is that explicit discussions of the values undergirdingtheory are never articulated, and goals are deemed good if they reflect the norms of society (Snyder, 2002). As Riele (2010) argued, the assumption that people are inherently well intentioned is flawed because it negates the larger social context and fails to account for the reasons why people are motivated to choose some goals over others, especially within a society characterized by differential access to opportunities. Furthermore, the idea of communal levels of hope (Snyder & Feldman, 2000) is strikingly devoid of meaningful discourse on the nature of relationships, whether in familial, academic, or vocational contexts, and the extent to which these relationships reinforce or challenge socially constructed barrier.

The results of this study lend credence to these criticisms by illuminating contextual processes, whether experienced distally or proximally, that impact how hope is embodied in people's lives.  Hope is integral to how the participants set goals, maintained relationships, lived within communities, and experienced poverty. This suggests that hope is a meaningful construct for understanding academic achievement and future planning among marginalized youth, even if theory as it stands now does not fully reflect their lives. Riele (2010) suggested that hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991) provides a starting point for understanding goal pursuit, but is incomplete in capturing the essence of hope, thereby creating the opportunities for critical reflection and theoretical

integration. The results of this study suggest that the essence of hope in the participants'

daily lives was experienced through relationships with relatives, teachers, peers, and

workplace supervisors. Since hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991) is defined primarily in

cognitive terms, the findings of the current study point to areas where relational theories

may add explanatory value.

**Conceptualizing the Relational Underpinnings of Hope**

As the results outlined above highlight, the participants demonstrated various

levels of planning and agency to pursue academic and career goals. Although consistent

in part with hope theory's model of individual effort (Snyder et al., 1991), the findings

suggest additionally that goal pursuit is nested within a relational context where

meaningful interactions with others play prominently into how individuals develop and

work towards their goals. Often in the literature, hope is described as the sum total of

efforts to plan and the ability to stay motivated with little attention on how or why (Riele,

2010). The results of this study provide insight into mechanisms for successful goal

pursuit, with relational processes being integral to academic success. The findings of the

current study, which go beyond the individualistic focus of hope theory (Snyder et al.,

1991) to suggest that participants  make meaning of their lives and set personally valued

goals through interactions with relatives, teachers, peers, and workplace supervisors.

The possibility of integrating hope theory (Snyder et al. 1991) with other

theoretical frameworks is not a novel idea, and research within educational and career

development (e.g., Kenny et al., 2010; Van Ryzin, 2011) have successfully combined

Snyder's framework with self-determination theory (Deci    Ryan, 1985). The results of

the current study show partial support for components of self-determination theory (Ryan

Deci, 1985), which emphasizes the value of support and autonomy in relationships in

fostering motivation.

The participants in this study embodied conversations with family members and

teachers to achieve their goals within the context of ongoing supportive familial,

academic, and vocational environments. This was most apparent when the participants

discussed academics, which often centered on overcoming poor academic performance

and working towards goals of attending post-secondary education. The participants

identified support from teachers and parents who believed in them even at times when the

participants did not believe in themselves. Additionally, participants were motivated or

even inspired by the behaviors and values of others, thereby creating momentum to reach

academic goals. The findings on the ways that participants embody their relational

contexts  is consistent with self-determination theory whereby internalization of others'

values  leads to autonomous forms of extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The

results of the study also support the presence of basic psychological needs that underlie

goal directed behavior because phenomenological stance made explicit the essence of

hope as it was experienced in the participants' daily lives. Despite findings that are show

support for self-determination theory, the nature of the study and the philosophical

underpinnings of the phenomenological methodology employed cannot explicate a

mechanism for internalization since embodiment of one's context is the primary way for

understanding how participants experience and understand the world (Applebaum, 2011).

The phenomenological stance taken in this study does not, for example, attempt to

uncover any internal structures that represent experience but rather attempts to see things

as the participants live them and brings into awareness what has been unspoken (Finlay, 2014)   With this point of divergence in mind, a discussion of psychological needs may proceed tempered by awareness of the epistemological assumptions of the phenomenological methodology used herein.

The participant responses suggested that relatedness was fundamental to interactions with teachers and workplace supervisors. In both settings, the participants discussed a feeling of belongingness. Academically, they identified a feeling of community among the staff and students with shared values and goals being identified. The participants also discussed being treated as equals in the workplace, and to a lesser extent some individuals discussed a sense of family. Consistent with self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), relationships with supportive adults across multiple settings fostered a sense of competence among participants. Academically, the participants discussed times when they successfully overcame challenges and learned from past mistakes, such as receiving low grades. By working with teachers and parents, the students developed a sense of mastery. At their internship sites, the participants believed that they could be successful in the workplace and could make meaningful contributions to important projects. The participants were able to draw meaningful connections between their daily tasks and pertinent activities at their sites.  In contrast with writings on self-determination theory, the role of skill acquisition, which is commonly associated with a burgeoning sense of competence (Deci    Ryan, 1985), was absent in the interviews for this study. One of the key questions to emerge from the participant responses, therefore, is how the supportive adults actually fostered competence. Prior theory and research suggests that constructive feedback and instrumental support are

likely mechanisms (Kenny et al., 2010; Ryan    Deci, 2002). Finally, the participants demonstrated autonomy, the third of Deci and Ryan's (1985) basic psychological needs, by setting goals that they believed were within their control and possible in the foreseeable future.

The integration of hope theory and self-determination theory is one area for expansion of theory that is supported by the participants' experiences. This is consistent with empirical trends that have already integrated these two frameworks. Kenny et al. (2010) and Van Ryzin (2011) found that aspects of both frameworks were related to indices of career exploration and academic achievement among adolescents in work-based learning programs and traditional high school settings. The benefit of such integration is that it helps to determine why individuals choose certain goals over others and which goals are most likely to be successfully reached. For these participants, meaningful goals were forged within supportive relationships and within a larger social and cultural context. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) can be used in concert with other relational theories to delineate the importance of relationships in the career development of marginalized groups (Blustein, 2011).

Blustein (2011) proposed a relational meta-framework for understanding how people draw meaning from their vocational lives that drew from theoretical contributions within and outside of the career development literature. This relational theory of working (Blustein, 2011)  suggested that people are inherently driven to connect with each other, and those connections create sources of meaning as individuals enter into work experiences and learn about themselves in the process (Gergen, 2009; Richardson, 1993).

The results of the current study support proposals by Blustein (2011) and Schultheiss (2007) that relationships are central to how people make meaning in their lives and think about their vocational futures. As Blustein (2011) noted, internalization is a vital process in understanding how relationships impact an individuals' constructions of the self, work, and society. Therefore, the self as an independent and separate entity is a misnomer because the self is inherently relational even at times when individuals are alone (Gergen, 2009). The results of the current finding support this premise even if the phenomenological stance creates a contradiction with relational theories' emphasis on internalization. It is through the embodiment of relational, social, and cultural contexts that participants defined and worked towards their goals and maintained commitment even in the face of obstacles. The idea of commitment to long-term goals requiring sustained effort is at the forefront of debates on grit and its applicability to the education of marginalized groups. Grit and its relationship to hope will be discussed in further detail below.

## Hope and Grit in the Lives of Disadvantaged Youth: Individualistic Solutions to Structural and Systemic Problems

Hope shares conceptual assumptions with grit, a concept often used to explain why some individuals but not others persevere when faced with challenging situations (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). Like hopeful people, gritty individuals are able to maintain sustained, systematic focus on their goals even at times when there is not an immediate pay-off and through periods of adversity. It is through commitment to goals of significant personal value, that gritty individuals are able to thrive and achieve success, even if they are not the most intelligent or talented (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Snyder et al. (1991) also suggested that hopeful individuals work towards goals that are inherently meaningful because those of the ones most likely to produce optimal levels of agency. Hope has been associated with academic success over and above commonly used predictors, such as IQ, GPA, and SAT scores (Day et al., 2010). Recent work by Tough (2012) has argued that children can overcome poverty through their "gritty character," an argument that has been criticized for reinforcing the myth of meritocracy (Anderson, 2014). Although Snyder (1995) has suggested that children from disadvantaged backgrounds face greater obstacles to achieving optimal levels of hope, his work has never approached Tough's (2012) argument that individual differences may allow some children to overcome poverty. Though varying by degree, these messages are strikingly similar and carry the same potential pitfalls of focusing on individual-level interventions to rectify academic failure without seriously weighing the impact of structural and systemic barriers.

The participants in this study may be considered hopeful or gritty, but individual traits and non-cognitive factors do not fully explicate the reasons why some children succeed despite substantial socially constructed barriers while others do not. The results of this study suggest that hope is grounded in relational, social, and cultural processes that help individuals to plan for the future and overcome hardship. Individual factors, such as motivation were important in understanding the lived experience of hope, but such experiences were best understood as nested within specific contexts and relational interactions. To suggest that hope or grit exists at the level of individual differences negates the importance of relationships, the educational environment, community characteristics, and cultural processes. Hope and grit may distinguish some children from

others but interventions should rise above efforts to build moral character and reinforce planning and motivation (Riele, 2010; Rose, 2014). As the results of this study suggest, hopeful and gritty students are likely to be motivated to succeed because of the relational, social, and cultural contexts they embody in their daily lives. In this sense, hopeless students of those perceived to lack essential grit may embody messages that blame them for academic failures rather than raising their awareness of socially constructed barriers (c.f., Riele, 2010; Rose 2014).

**Implications for WBL Programs and Educational Reform**

The results of this study suggest that the WBL program these participants attended did have a positive impact on their career goals, sense of mastery, and knowledge of the corporate work environment. This was achieved through supportive relationships with supervisors and other adults in the workplace. Although a direct relationship between this support and academic outcomes was not sought in the study, these results to have implications for delineating the characteristics of successful  WBL programs and determining their benefits for low income students of color. The results of this study suggest that successful WBL programs have committed staff who value educating young people and supporting their full development within and outside of the workplace. Skill acquisition appears to be important based upon participant reports, but it should be viewed within a relational context with a holistic approach to preparing students for post-secondary education and career (c.f., Kenny et al., in press). This suggests that attention to staff training and the development of a comprehensive vision for student success are necessary. This vision should go beyond development of systems to promote skill acquisition by also working to develop a work environment where

students are treated with respect as potential contributors to a company's success. This was particularly important to these participants, who were often able to view their actions as meaningful to others. Overall, these participants' experiences suggest that WBL can have a positive impact on youth through relational and instrumental support, which may in turn foster motivation to achieve goals (c.f., Kenny et al., 2010). This suggests that evaluations of WBL programs should give consideration to relational and systemic factors that help students to have meaningful experiences in their daily work lives, thereby facilitating motivation to succeed and career exploration. Therefore, evaluations on objective student outcomes based on the types of WBL programs available, continue to be necessary because of ongoing questions about how to best prepare students for post-secondary education and rapidly evolving workforce demands (Kenny, 2013). In addition, the results of this study suggest successful WBL programs may also be characterized by an environment conducive to positive student outcomes via workplace structures and polices that allow supervisors to provide additional attention to students and take an active interest in their academic interests and personal lives. Evaluations that can delineate the types of environments in WBL programs that are conducive to success can supplement existing strategies for assessing the value of this educational model in preparing student for their futures.

Despite the avenues for evaluation that emerged from these findings, there are still unanswered questions about the specific benefits of WBL programs for low income students of color. The participants did not explicitly discuss any experiences with workplace supervisors about race, ethnicity, immigration status, or social class, and the study design did not include interviews with these supervisors to explore this possibility.

Thus, it is unclear if the support these students received was influenced by awareness of socially constructed barriers on the part of supervisors and a desire to integrate discussions of social identity and oppression into workplace interactions. However, the results do suggest that the relational support from workplace supervisors was impactful and meaningful for participants and may have provided a counter to the messages about ability and potential that low-income students of color likely encounter elsewhere in society (Fine et al., 2010). Previous work by Kenny et al. (in press) found that some workplace supervisors were mindful of diversity in interacting with their supervisees, and a number of career interventions with students of color incorporate social justice and multiculturalism into career interventions (Kenny et al., 2013). However, this study does not provide answers on whether or not this particular WBL program provided added benefits to diverse or marginalized groups beyond what could be expected in other programs or if the support for these participants was explicitly framed through an awareness of the challenges the students face in their daily lives.

In terms of the classroom and school environment, participants discussed warmth and caring from their teachers and an overall sense of community within the school. The participants described times when teachers helped them through specific academic challenges, such as achieving better grades, but did not discuss specific competencies or academic skills that teachers fostered. Instead these participants focused on self-efficacy and hope for the future, which were influenced in part by supportive relationships with teachers within a school context where students feel that academic success is a viable outcome. It is likely that these teachers developed specific competencies and skill sets that helped these students to overcome academic challenges and progress through their

academic careers. However, the development of these abilities appears to be secondary to the support that the students received and the value they placed on maintaining meaningful relationships with teachers. While these results to not challenge the basic premise of NCLB or RTTT to hold teachers and school administrators accountable for the quality of education they provide, it does suggest that emphasis should also be placed on helping teachers and schools to develop the skills needed to engage their students and support efforts to build relationships because doing so appears to foster motivation and a desire to learn, which may in turn buffer against school disengagement. In light of arguments that NCLB and RTTT may actually undermine teacher-student relationships through a metric that judges teachers' ability through their students' assessment outcomes (Onosko, 2011), these findings are particularly relevant. These participants were sampled from a school with a reputation within its community for high graduation rate and success in helping students to gain acceptance into post-secondary education. The results suggest that committed teachers who inspired their students and fostered meaningful relationships were in part responsible for these outcomes.

Relationships with family members were also fundamental to identifying goals, overcoming challenges, and defining the terms for academic success. This ongoing support was within specific social and cultural contexts for these participants. The two contexts of primary significance to these participants were poverty and immigration to the United States. The common essence of hope was a lived experienced for the participants whether through direct interactions with family members or through observation. These findings suggest that schools should not only seek to nurture relationships with families, but should also consider the impact of socially constructed

barriers, such as poverty, on how parents define goals for their children. Thus, schools should be knowledgeable of not only the demographic characteristics of their students, but also the life experiences and community characteristics that are likely to impact how they define the possibility for academic success. Furthermore, the results of the current study suggest that collaboration between teachers and parents may be beneficial when seeking to engage struggling students, especially when specific cultural values and family experiences undergird how the students think about their future opportunities. This is a place where NCLB and RTTT have been criticized for a neglect of issues of race, social class, and culture due to the decontextualized focus on standardized testing and accountability standards. The results of this study suggest that parents are concerned with their children's educational futures, and students are motivated in part by social identities and familial experiences with socially constructed barriers. Current educational reform efforts fall short in addressing the role of the social context, particularly the impact of poverty and racism, on how students achieve and the challenges they face. The results of the current study elucidates on a small scale how low income students of color can achieve positive academic outcomes through support from teachers and collaboration between parents and schools.

The participants discussed a sense of community within the school as integral to relationships with peers and teachers and fundamental to hope about the future. The results of this study challenge the individualistic focus of hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991), suggesting that hope can be fostered at collective level when a sense of community unites students and faculty. Riele (2010) argued that hope can be fostered at the institutional level through a clearly articulated mission aimed at illuminating

possibilities.  This study suggests that one of the key ways to foster hope is to create what

Riele (2010) calls an "ethos of hope" within schools that helps students to experience

support from workplace supervisors and teachers and communicates an overall message

that success is possible, even in the face of adversity. These participants embodied this by

working towards their goals, motivating their peers, and believing in the mission of the

school. This suggests that schools that aim to foster hope among the study body should

work towards creating an atmosphere where students feel valued by the staff, inspired by

their dedication, and connected to their peers. The implications of the current study and

Riele's (2010) work suggest that outstanding schools, committed teachers, and successful

students cannot be fully defined by the types of measurable, standardized outcomes so

often associated with NCLB and RTTT. Academic success for students in this study was

found within relational and social processes at school and within an educational context

that has the potential to be transformative in their personal and academic lives. Current

reform efforts have been criticized for reducing students' academic potential to a series of

metrics that focuses on development in a narrow sense (Onosko, 2011). The

consequences have been particularly detrimental for marginalized groups, such as low

income students of color (Fine et al., 2010). The participants in this study described daily

experiences in which supportive teachers did not base their potential as students on test

scores. Although the participants did not describe explicit conversations with teachers

and school staff about racism or poverty, it is likely that these adults did have some

appreciation of these students' personal lives and the characteristics of the surrounding

community. Therefore, the types of outcomes that NCBL and RTTT have yet to achieve

for these students may be attainable with greater emphasis on building effective schools

through relational and structural interventions rather than through initiatives based on accountability and competition.

With regard to educational models and policies, the current study suggests that effective WBL programs are characterized supportive workplace supervisors who value relationships with their supervisees and work environments where students feel respected. This may be an underlying mechanism for the positive academic outcomes reported in some quantitative evaluations of WBL programs (Kenny, 2013). The participants also describe a supportive and caring school environment where they feel supported and inspired by their teachers. These findings when taken together suggest that effective WBL programs are likely to be most successful when matched with schools that can nurture student development and promote a culture of possibility. Therefore, further evaluations of WBL programs may also benefit from attention to school characteristics that underlie academic achievement.

**Implications for Hope-Based Interventions in Schools and Assessment**

The participants' experiences detailed in this study suggest that existing school-based interventions based on hope theory (e.g., Lopez, Rose, Robinson, Marques,    Pais-Ribeiro, 2009) might be strengthened through further attention to relational, social, and cultural factors. Relationships were central to goal pursuit among these participants and undergirded the value the participants placed on academic success. Teachers and workplace supervisors provided instrumental support that helped the participants to articulate their goals and address obstacles within the context of a caring relationship. Teachers were described as sources of inspiration because of their dedication, and

workplace supervisors were considered as mentors or even mother figures. For these participants, the quality of the relationship was a defining feature that helped them to achieve their goals. This suggests that interventions aimed at helping students to meet their academic goals or explore their career options should also address ways for supportive, non-parental adults to enhance the connection they feel with young people. The quality of the relationship has received some attention in hope theory primarily related to the parent-child bond or the therapeutic relationship (Snyder et al., 1991; Shorey et al., 2003 Cheavens et al. 2006), but little has been written on the quality of other relationships that may foster hope. Career development research has suggested that students' academic success and motivation to succeed is buttressed through relational and instrumental support in the workplace and the classroom (Kenny et al., 2013; Kenny et al., 2007).

Overall, the results of this study support existing applications of hope theory in school based interventions designed to increase agency and planning. However, the participants' experiences also delineate areas where further attention to contextual factors and cultural values is not only warranted but may be essential to creating meaningful interventions. As such, any interventions focused on students' motivation to pursue goals and take the necessary steps should nest these efforts within a larger sociocultural framework. This is an area where Snyder (1995) acknowledges the role of socially constructed barriers and cultural values in the development of hope (Pedrotti et al., 2008), but does not make them central to how people define hope. Thus, current interventions (e.g., Lopez, et al., 2009) tend to minimize these factors when it appears based upon the accounts of these participants that doing so fundamentally negates the essence of their

experiences. This study illuminates possible avenues for intervention at individual and institutional levels that hold promise in enhancing hope among the student body and helping individuals to reach their goals.

The results of the current study also suggest that assessment tools based upon Snyder et al.'s (1991) theory may not fully capture the lived experience of hope for these participants and other low income students of color. While the participants described experiences indicative of agency, discussions of planning were notably absent in most cases. Therefore, hopeful participant believed that success was possible and were motivated to achieve their goals, but they did not outline or necessarily know the required steps. This is consistent with previous findings by Tong et al. (2010) who found that participants described themselves as hopeful even without a clearly articulated goal. The results of this study also suggest that further research is needed to understand how lay people, whether children or adults, distinguish between hope and optimism.

Current assessment may be useful in some circumstances to identity the extent to which agency and pathways are present in goal planning for young people, but the extent to which current assessments address how lay people understand and experience hope is called into question. In the current study, hope was clearly experienced within a relational context and reflected an embodiment of the social contexts. Using assessments as the primary method for determining levels of hope for low-income students of color is unlikely to delineate these individuals' strengths, values, and abilities to overcome adversity. Further research is needed to develop assessments that are methodologically sound and accurately reflect the lives of marginalized groups. Continued reliance on individualistic assessments that view goal pursuit in isolation not only falls short of

conceptualizing the role of hope in people's lives but also creates the risk of blaming

individuals for having low levels of hope when in reality they are faced with socially

constructed barriers outside of their control. Overall, the results of the current study

suggest that hope is experienced within relational and social contexts, and its relationship

with academic achievement cannot be assessed in cognitive terms alone. Ultimately,

Snyder et al.'s (1991) decontextualized assessment strategies may fail to appropriately

show a connection between experiences of hope and academic achievement in low

income students of color.

**Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Although promising, the results of this study are impacted by several noteworthy

limitations. First, this was a self-selected sample in which interested individuals agreed to

participate. The students who volunteered for this study may represent the individuals

within the school with the highest levels of hope and the most resources, whether

internally or externally derived, available to them. These participants may reflect a subset

of all students within the school rather than a representation of all students enrolled.

Students attending this school may also be unrepresentative of students in other school,

neighborhood, or cultural contexts. In this study, all of the participants identified

academic goals of graduating from high school and attending post-secondary institutions

and made statements indicative of planning efforts, such as involving parents or meeting

with guidance counselors. This may not be the norm for the entire student body at this

school or high school youth in general. Additionally, this study did not require the

participants to provide their GPAs. This is typically seen as a marker of academic

achievement. Within the context of this study, it may also indicate that these students are

successful in reaching their goals and possessed the requisite skill set needed.  Thus, an

important extension of this study and the body of literature on hope in high school

students is to determine if high levels of hope are related to the skills needed to be

successful in post-secondary education. This study suggests that hope is related to self-

efficacy, which has been showed empirically in the past, but it is unclear if these highly

motivated students have the skills to complement their desire to succeed in the future.

This unanswered question may be addressed in future studies, whether qualitative or

qualitative in design, by following students longitudinally across their high school years

and possibly into college. This would allow researchers to further delineate how goals are

formed, revised, and achieved in the face of adversity, changing developmental needs,

and burgeoning career interests.

The school itself represents a specific context through which hope develops. The

religious affiliation likely sets it apart from other work-based learning programs because

the school enrolls many students who identify as Catholic or value religiously-affiliated

education. The finding that hope was fostered and experienced through a relationship

with a higher power is important for extending existing theory, but these results may not

transfer to other settings where students do not identify as religious or spiritual and where

the school's mission and curriculum are secular in nature. Although religious and

spiritual students may attend public secondary institutions, the interaction of the school's

mission and individual values likely created a specific context where structural levels of

support are present via a sense of a community. Additionally, students in other

educational settings who do not participate in work-based learning programs may have

different experiences of hope. These participants received support from workplace

supervisors in addition to school staff, parents, and other supportive adults. The process

of working in a corporate environment may have facilitated goal-setting and planning

through that relational support and exposure to careers through observation and

networking opportunities.

Many of the participants in the study discussed their families' experiences as

immigrants or the struggles they faced financially. These were the aspects of identity and

socially constructed barriers that were the most prominent in their lives. The participants

were not explicitly instructed to discuss experiences with racism and various forms of

discrimination, but the structure of the interview protocol afforded the opportunity to do

so if desired. The results of this study do not shed light onto how these socially

constructed barriers impact hope and academic achievement among low income students

of color. These participants may have been fully aware of the impact of racism and

discrimination on their lives and chose not to pursue these lines of conversation with a

White researcher. The dynamic created by the cross-racial dyad may have deterred these

conversations in some cases. Subsequent studies may benefit from a more diverse

research team to conduct the interviews. It is also possible that the participants were less

aware of racism, discrimination, and differential opportunities for career attainment. In

this case, it may be beneficial for future studies to consider how racial identity and hope

are related to each other and impact how young people think about their career futures.

This study was conducted at a specific time point and within a specific

community. This was apparent in the results of the written activity where references to

the Boston Marathon Bombings were common. The ways in which these participants

experienced hope was impacted by the ways that they made meaning of witnessing

others' resilience in the aftermath of the tragedy. This may be due in part to how soon after these events that the study was conducted. The participants completed the written activity only weeks after the bombing and during a time when news stories about the survivors were commonplace. It is possible that the impact of the event carried so much weight for the participants because of the timing of the study. Future studies may not find that hope is experienced through witnessing resilience to this tragedy, but it is an important implication of this study that hope was nested within a belief in others' resilience in response to an event that impacted a community and a nation.

Finally, this study drew awareness to the daily lives of motivated and goal-oriented students who thrived in school and the workplace through meaningful connections to teachers and supervisors. These findings suggest that future research on WBL programs would benefit from attention to relational factors that contribute to a meaningful experience while acquiring requisite vocational skills. What has also been made explicit from the participants' daily lives is that a future orientation and motivation to attend college is multifaceted and embedded within relational, social, and cultural contexts and where oppression is a lived experience for participants and their families. This suggests that the ways to help low income students of color to succeed are not captured solely by delineating the components of effective WBL programs. Continued research may prove beneficial in defining the best practices for WBL programs, but academic success and the potential for a meaningful work life for low income students of color should not be limited to discussion of skill acquisition.

**Conclusion**

The participants in this study experienced hope in their daily lives through meaningful relationships with parents, teachers, workplace supervisors, peers, and a higher power. They also described a school atmosphere conducive to academic success and future possibility. Thus, the results illuminated ways that pathways and agency are experienced in relational, communal, social, and cultural contexts, thereby providing avenues to extend existing theory through further research. Additionally, the participants' experiences provide insight into the characteristics of effective WBL programs and suggest future directions for evaluations by highlighting potential relational determinants of students' success. Within the school setting, the bond between students and their teachers within a stimulating and hopeful school environment suggested that academic achievement could be conceptualized within a relational context and challenged educational policies like NCLB and RTTT that focus primarily on objective measures of accountability.  Despite shortcomings that limit the applicability of these findings to other educational settings, the results delineate a dynamic and complex experience of hope for low-income students of color with clear applications for building supportive relationships and effective schools were hope is embodied in the students' everyday experiences.

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Appendix A

Participant Demographics

| Name | Grade | Age | Self-Identified Race/Ethnicity |
|------|-------|-----|-------------------------------|
| Maria | 11 | 17 | Hispanic |
| Daniel | 12 | 18 | Black/Caribbean |
| Alonso | 11 | 17 | Hispanic |
| Antonia | 11 | 17 | Hispanic |
| Sofia | 11 | 17 | Hispanic |
| Lorenzo | 12 | 18 | Hispanic |
| Gabriel | 11 | 17 | Black/Cape-Verdean |
| Samuel | 11 | 16 | Hispanic |
| Tamara | 11 | 16 | Black/Haitian |
| Mateo | 12 | 19 | Hispanic |
| Alex | 11 | 18 | Black/African American |
| Jada | 11 | 16 | Black/African American |
| Chloe | 11 | 17 | Black/African American |
| Nia | 11 | 16 | Black/African American |
| Jasmin | 11 | 16 | Black/Caribbean |
| Martin | 11 | 17 | Hispanic |
| Zach | 11 | 17 | Black and  Native American |
| Elena | 11 | 17 | Hispanic |
| Alexis | 11 | 17 | Black/Jamaican |
| Leah | 11 | 17 | Multi-Racial |
| Carmen | 11 | 18 | Multi-Racial |

Appendix B

<u>Recruitment Script</u>

Hello. My name is Mary Beth Medvide. I am a student at Boston College. I am interested in the ███████████████████████ , and how this program helps students. I am interested in what you think about the program, your goals, and your hopes for the future.

I am looking for people to participate in a group activity with other students and an interview with me. In the group activity, we will discuss what hope could mean to people. Then participants will write about things in the community that bring people hope. I will also ask participants to tell me their age, race, and ethnicity. In the interview, I will ask questions about experiences in the ███████████████████ and goals for the future. Everyone who participates will receive a $10 iTunes gift card.

I will audiotape the discussions and the interviews. The tapes will be destroyed once I make transcripts.

Your responses are private and confidential. This means other people will not know what you wrote or said to me. If you participate, I will not use your name. I will give you an identification number that will be used in the study. When I talk or write about the study, I will not use your name.

If you decide to participate, you can decide not to answer a question or quit at any time. Nothing bad will happen to you.

Are there any questions you would like to ask?

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

1.      Please tell me about a typical day at your internship site.

2.      Please describe your relationships with supervisors, employees, and other adults at your internship.

3.      What helps you to do well at work?

4.      Is there anything that keeps you from doing well at work?

5.      If you have a problem at work, who can you go to?

6.      What are your academic goals?

6A.     What are some ways that you can reach these goals?

6B.     What are some potential barriers?

6C.     What helps you to stay motivated?

6D.     Please describe any people who help you reach your academic goals.

7.      What are your career goals?

7A.     What are some ways that you can reach these goals?

7B.     What are some potential barriers?

7C.     What helps you to stay motivated?

7D.     Please describe any people who help you reach your career goals.

8.      What are four or five words to describe how you think about the future?

8A.      What made you pick those words?

9.      Describe a time when you felt hopeful.

9A.     What made you feel hopeful?

10.     Describe a time when you felt hopeless.

10A.    What made you feel hopeless?

10B.    What helped you to overcome this feeling?

11.     If someone asked you to describe hope, what would you say?

12.     Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix D



**Boston College Lynch School of Education**

**Parental Permission for a Child to Participate in: Hope in the Lives of Low-Income
Students of Color: A Qualitative Study of Experiences in Work-Based Learning
Programs
Mary Beth Medvide, Principal Investigator
Created March 4, 2013**

### Introduction

- Your child is being asked to be in a research study on students' perceptions of work-based learning programs, future goals, and ideas on what brings them hope.
- Your child is a possible participant because he or she participates in the ████████ ████████████████████████████████ .
- Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before giving permission for your child to be in the study.

### Purpose of Study:

- The purpose of this study how students perceive work-based learning, talk about future goals, and discuss what brings them hope. .
- Participants attend ████████████ ▒▒▒▒▒▒▒ . About ten students will participate.

### Description of Study Procedures:

- If you give permission for your child to be in this study, your child will do the following things:
- Talk to a group of other students and a researcher about what hope means
- Write about things in the community that could bring people hope.
- Talk to a researcher about the ███████████████████████ and future goals.
- If your child does not want to answer a question, he or she does not have to answer it.
- Allow the researcher to record the group discussion and the interview with the researcher.
- The study will take place after school. The group activity will take one hour, including 30 minutes to write about hope.
- The individual interview will take one hour.
- If you do not want your child's answers recorded, please tell the researcher. She will not record them.

**Risks to Being in Study:**

- It might cause your son or daughter discomfort to think about themselves and the future in new ways.

**Benefits of Being in Study:**

- The study may help your child to think about his/her future goals.
- Your child's answers may help teachers and school administrators to improve the work-based learning program.

**Payments:**

- Your child will receive a $10 iTunes gift card. Your child will receive the gift card even if he/she does not complete all of the activities.

**Costs:**

- It does not cost anything for your child to participate.

**Confidentiality:**

- The records of this study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. When the writing activity and group interviews have been completed, your child's name will be removed. It will be replaced with a number.  In any published report, the researcher will not include any personal information. Research records will be kept in a locked file. Only the researcher will be able to see these records. However, it is possible that the Institutional Review Board at Boston College will review the research records.

- The group discussion and the interviews will be audiotaped. The files will be uploaded to a computer that is password protected. Only the researcher will have access to the files. They will be destroyed when the study is over.

**Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:**

- You decide if you want your child to participate. If you decide not to give permission, nothing bad will happen to your child. It will not affect his or her grades or participation in the work-study program.

- You can decide at any time to withdrawal your child from the study. This decision will not affect his or her grades or participation in the work-study program.
.
**Dismissal from the Study:**

- The researcher asks that the participants do their best to answer questions and follow directions. If this does not happen, the researcher may ask the child to leave the study. This will not hurt your child's grades or participation in the work-study program.

**Contacts and Questions:**

- The researcher conducting this study is Mary Beth Medvide, a graduate student at Boston College. You may contact her at ▌▌▌▌▌▌▌ if you have any questions or would like more information.

- If you believe your child may have suffered an injury during the study, contact Mary Beth Medvide at ▌▌▌▌▌▌ .

- If you have any questions about your child's rights as a research participant, you may contact the Director of the Office for Research Protections, Boston College at (617) 552-4778, or irb@bc.edu

**Copy of Consent Form:**

- You will be given a copy of this form in case you want to contact Mary Beth Medvide or look at the form in the future.

**Statement of Consent:**

- For Parental Permission Form: I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions.  I have received answers to my questions.  I give my consent for my child to participate in this study.  I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

**Signatures/Dates:**

Name of Child (Print Name): _____

Parent/Guardian (Print Name): _____

Parent/Guardian (Signature): _____Date _____

Appendix E

**Boston College Lynch School of Education**

**Informed Consent to Participate in: Hope in the Lives of Low-Income Students of
Color: A Qualitative Study of Experiences in Work-Based Learning Programs
Mary Beth Medvide, Principal Investigator
Created March 4, 2013**

**Why have I been asked to take part in the study?**

- Because you are a student who is at least 18 years old and you attend ███████ """
  ████.
- Because you might like to talk about the ████████ """"""""""""""" , your future
  goals, and what brings you hope.

**What do I do first?**

- Please read this form before you agree to be in the study.
- Please ask questions if something doesn't make sense.

**What is the Study about?**

- This study is about what students think about the ████████████████████,
  their future goals, and what brings them hope.
- About 10 students from ███████████ will participate.

**If I agree to take part, what will I be asked to do?**

1. Talk to a group of other students and a researcher about what hope means
2. Write about things in your community that could bring people hope.
3. Talk to a researcher about the Corporate Work Study Program and your future goals.
4. If you do not wish to answer a question, you do not have to answer it
5. Allow us to record your interview with the researcher and the group discussion on
   what hope means
6. If you do not wish to have your answers recorded, please tell the researcher, and she
   will not record them.

7. The group activity will take about 60 minutes, including 30 minutes to write about hope. The interview will take about 60 minutes.

**What are the risks to being in the study?**

- It might be hard you think about yourself and the future in new ways.

**What are the benefits to being in the study?**

- It may help you to think about your future goals.
- It may help teachers and school administrators to think about work-based learning programs and how to make them better.
- Students who participate will be given a $10 iTunes gift card. They will receive a gift card even if they do not complete all of the activities.

**How will things I say be kept private?**

- The researcher will not share your personal information with other people.
- Sometimes Boston College's IRB may review the researcher's records.
- The researcher will not use people's names when she writes about the study.
- The research records will be kept in a locked file.
- The research records will be destroyed after the study is over.

**What if I choose to not take part or leave the study?**

- You decide if you want to participate.
- Nothing bad will happen to you if you do not participate.
- You can stop answering questions at any time. Nothing bad will happen to you.
- It does not cost anything to participate

**Will I be dismissed from the Study?**

- The researcher asks that you try your best to answer questions. If participants do not try their best, the researcher may ask them not to participate anymore.

**Who do I contact if I have any questions?**

- You can contact Mary Beth Medvide, a graduate student at Boston College, if you have any questions. Her number is ███████████.
- If you think that something bad happened because you participated in the study, contact Mary Beth Medvide at ███████████. She will help you to decide what to do next.
- If you have any questions about your rights as a person participating in a research study, you may contact the Director, Office for Research Protections, Boston College at (617) 552-4778 or irb@bc.edu.

### Will I get a copy of this consent form?

- Yes, you can keep it in case you need to contact Mary Beth Medvide or want to look at the form in the future.

### Statement of Consent:

- I read this form or someone read it to me.
- I have been encouraged to ask questions.
- I have received answers to my questions.
- I give my consent to take part in this study.
- I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

### Signatures/Dates:

Study Participant (Print Name): _____

Participant Signature: _____ Date _____

Appendix F



**Boston College Lynch School of Education**

**Assent to Participate in Hope in the Lives of Low-Income Students of Color: A
Qualitative Study of Experiences in Work-Based Learning Programs
Mary Beth Medvide, Principal Investigator
Child Assent Ages 12-17
Created March 4, 2013**

**Why have I been asked to take part in the study?**

- Because you are a student who attends ███████ ███████.
- Because you might like to talk about the ███████ ███████, your
  future goals, and what brings you hope.

**What do I do first?**

- Please read this form before you agree to be in the study.
- Please ask questions if something doesn't make sense.

**What is the Study about?**

- This study is about what students think about the ███████,
  their future goals, and what brings them hope.
- About 10 students from ███████ will participate.

**If I agree to take part, what will I be asked to do?**

8. Talk to a group of other students and a researcher about what hope means
9. Write about things in your community that could bring people hope.
10. Talk to a researcher about the ███████ and your future goals.
11. If you do not wish to answer a question, you do not have to answer it
12. Allow us to record your interview with the researcher and the group discussion on
    what hope means

13. If you do not wish to have your answers recorded, please tell the researcher, and she will not record them.
14. The group activity will take about 60 minutes, including 30 minutes to write about hope. The interview will take about 60 minutes.

## What are the risks to being in the study?

- It might be hard you think about yourself and the future in new ways.

## What are the benefits to being in the study?

- It may help you to think about your future goals.

- It may help teachers and school administrators to think about work-based learning programs and how to make them better.
- Students who participate will receive a $10 iTunes gift card. They will receive the gift card even if they do not complete all of the activities.

## How will things I say be kept private?

- The researcher will not share your personal information with other people.
- Sometimes Boston College's IRB may review the researcher's records.
- The researcher will not use people's names when she writes about the study.
- The research records will be kept in a locked file
- The research records will be destroyed after the study is over.

## What if I choose to not take part or leave the study?

- You decide if you want to participate.
- Nothing bad will happen to you if you do not participate.
- You can stop answering questions at any time. Nothing bad will happen to you.
- It does not cost anything to participate

## Will I be dismissed from the Study?

- The researcher asks that you try your best to answer questions. If participants do not try their best, the researcher may ask them not to participate anymore.

## Who do I contact if I have any questions?

- You can contact Mary Beth Medvide, a graduate student at Boston College, if you have any questions. Her number is ███████.

- If you think that something bad happened because you participated in the study, contact Mary Beth Medvide at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.  She will help you to decide what to do next.
- If you have any questions about your rights as a person participating in a research study, you may contact the Director, Office for Research Protections, Boston College at (617) 552-4778 or irb@bc.edu.

**Will I get a copy of this consent form?**

- Yes, you can keep it in case you need to contact Mary Beth Medvide or want to look at the form in the future.

**Statement of Consent:**

- I read this form or someone read it to me.
- I have been encouraged to ask questions.
- I have received answers to my questions.
- I give my consent to take part in this study.
- I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

**Signatures/Dates:**

Study Participant (Print Name): _____

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness/Auditor (Signature): _____Date:_____