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**Hope as a Process and an Orientation: A Qualitative Study of American Young Adults' Relationship with Change, Difficulty, and Uncertainty**

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**Hope as a Process and an Orientation: A Qualitative Study of American Young  
Adults' Relationship with Change, Difficulty, and Uncertainty**

**By**

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**Dissertation**

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*To Mum and Dad*

*I could not have hoped to get so far, or have done so much, without you.*

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**Hope as a Process and an Orientation: A Qualitative Study of American Young  
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In this study I explored the intrapersonal and interpersonal differences among individuals who maintained higher levels of hope for their personal future, with lower hope peers who similarly were experiencing challenging and uncertain circumstances. I administered self-report measures of hope and social connectedness to 76 American young adults aged between 18 and 22 years, in order to sample purposively participants who exemplified higher and lower levels of hope. I used qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with 13 individuals recruited from three field sites to develop the current model of hope, then tested the model against an additional three individuals from a separate field site, who had scored highly on hope, in order to establish its generalizability. Total interview time with each of the original 13 participants lasted between two and four hours and I coded the resulting transcription data from audio taped discussions for categories and main themes according to grounded theory guidelines. The emergent model of hope comprised five themes, namely:

- 1) The Initiating Context: Perceptions of challenge and uncertainty
- 2) Temporal Comparisons: Envisioning the future, being realistic about the present, learning from the past
- 3) Developing Strategies: Values, goals, planning, and action
- 4) Drawing on personal and social resources
- 5) Openness and flexibility about outcomes

These data suggested that the higher hope participants differed from their lower hope peers with respect to their relationship with change, difficulty, and uncertainty. The higher hope young adults engaged in a process of hoping that relied on an overall positive orientation toward life. This combination of process and orientation better enabled them to take action, exert control, and regulate the fear experienced when faced with ambiguous outcomes associated with personally important and difficult circumstances. I compared and contrasted this new, inductively-derived model of hope with current conceptualizations from the psychological, philosophical, and nursing literatures on hope, and discussed its theoretical and practical implications.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

*“Like, I wanted to move out of my parents’ house and get my own house and things like that so I bounced it off three or four different people...you know, so it was like all these different inputs that really helped form my decision.” (Helen, aged 21)*

*“At this moment I’m feeling a bit stressed out. I’m almost finished with high school but I’m not sure I can make it in the real world. I’m at this strange transition point...and it seems like everyone’s distancing themselves from me because I’m going to move out soon and start college.” (Lacey, aged 18)*

In many ways Helen and Lacey are alike and in others they are quite different. Both are white, middle class young adults who were born and live in Texas. They share the same first name (those used throughout this dissertation are pseudonyms) and eventually attended the same community college. For most of their lives, each has lived with two professionally-employed parents and a younger sister. They both graduated high school on time in the face of emotional and practical challenges. Helen became pregnant in her junior year and was out of school for a month before returning to complete her education, in the face of considerable condemnation and judgment from her peers. She has raised her son as a single parent ever since. Lacey “hated” high school and claimed that other students considered her “weird,” possibly because of her passion for Gay Rights. Upon finding that she did not have enough credits to graduate on time, Lacey dropped out of mainstream schooling and immediately registered in a self-paced charter school program and achieved her high school diploma.

Yet their polarized scores on self-report instruments measuring hope and social connectedness, along with subsequent interview data such as those quoted at the opening to this chapter, indicate that Helen and Lacey think, feel, and act quite differently with

respect to their futures. They are just two of the young adults aged between 18 and 22 years who contributed to the development of an inductively-derived model of hope in order to help me better understand why, when faced with challenge and uncertainty, some young people maintain higher levels of hope with respect to their futures, and others do not.

### **Why Study Hope?**

When people ask me how I came to research hope I tell them that, in a sense, I did not find my dissertation topic, it found me by way of an earlier interest in future time orientation (e.g., Husman & Lens, 1999). While exploring that literature, I came upon various references to hope and, in the manner of an Internet search engine that serendipitously leads you somewhere you never intended to go, I began following a trail of references that led me to one of C. R. Snyder's seminal articles on hope (e.g., Snyder et al., 1991). Somewhere in my mind a metaphorical light bulb went off. As I reflected on this in writing a process journal, I realized how studying hope might help me to understand why, in my role as a career coach, only some of my clients appeared willing to take the risks associated with making major career changes and to view uncertainty as a necessary step in that process. Although I did not think about it as such at the time, it seems to me now that those individuals who achieved success with my career coaching had higher hopes for a personal future, whereas the less successful ones were unable to draw upon the same reserves of imagination, courage, and action to make that change.

My interest in hope is also informed by my association with what has been called the *positive psychology* movement (see Linley & Joseph, 2004, for a review), and the attendant focus on strengths. As this dissertation unfolds, one will undoubtedly become aware of my bias toward emphasizing those stories in which higher levels of hope helped to guide and support some of these participants to successful outcomes, rather than do what we psychologists typically do and place undue emphasis on pathology and deficit.



### **Statement of the Problem**

Once confined to the domains of clinical psychology, researchers are at long last paying increased attention to hope in relation to academic achievement. For example, the recent focus on the influence of emotions on teaching and learning (see Schutz & Pekrun, 2007, for a review) has identified hope as one of the positive emotions, along with enjoyment and pride, that are most frequently reported in academic contexts. In particular, Pekrun and his colleagues (Pekrun, 2006; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002) found that positive emotions, including hope, appeared to impact positively students' interest in learning, their motivation to expend effort to achieve academic outcomes, and the self-regulatory behaviors that keep them in school. However, to date, no research appeared to have specifically focused on the hopes of young people transitioning out of adolescence into adulthood, and the potential association between their academic and career aspirations and their level of hope. Nor, to my knowledge, had any empirical study directly investigated the relationship between hope and social connectedness.

Hope, like forgiveness or bravery, is largely context-specific, and is considered to be adaptive in conditions of uncertainty (Roseman & Evdokas, 2004). It has been also long-associated with transcending difficulty (Aquinas, trans.1947; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). In order to more easily sample young adults who were experiencing challenge and uncertainty on a daily basis, I requested and was given permission to recruit participants from three organizations whose services were aimed at one or more of the following social issues: teenage pregnancy, low or no income, homelessness, deficient in basic academic skills (typically high school dropout), disability, and contact with the juvenile justice system. Although this is not an exhaustive list of the difficulties or "at risk" factors that some young people face, I considered these contexts to be fairly typical and hence suitable starting points for an examination of hope. Indeed, by drawing participants from these three field sites, namely a youth services organization, a charter high school, and a peer educator program for teenage parents, I was confident that I would find sufficiently diverse levels of hope and social connectedness to help me identify factors that differentiated higher hope and lower hope individuals facing similarly challenging

and uncertain situations. As the study progressed, these criteria for participant selection were widened to include other life challenges such as the loss of a parent or parental abuse.

Although many of the challenges outlined above tend to be associated with economic disadvantage, I discovered during the interview process that approximately half of the young people I interviewed were from middle-class backgrounds. Another finding was that two of the four lower hope participants were gay. Reviewing the literature on the prevalence of suicidal ideation among young homosexuals (Fergusson, Horwood, Ridder, & Beautrais, 2005; Kulkin, Chauvin, & Percle, 2000) and the socially accepted intolerance and violence against young gays by their heterosexual peers (Franklin, 2000), this is perhaps not unexpected. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that the lower levels of hope that I was investigating are not to be confused with the “hopelessness” that Beck and his colleagues (Beck, Weissman, Lester, & Trexler, 1974) have used to describe suicidal ideation. Certainly, none of the lower hope participants I interviewed appeared at risk of taking their own lives, and ironically the only two individuals who shared with me their tendency toward depression were two higher hope young men. In this regard, then, the term “lower hope” merely quantifies a reduced tendency to think, feel, and act in relation to the five themes that emerged from this study, and not the hopelessness associated with taking one’s own life.

A further point concerning the terminology I used with respect to identifying the participants as “higher” or “lower” in hope is warranted here. As will become clear, the hope investigated in this study was not an attribute of persons but a complex interaction between an individual and his or her social environment. As such I found that these participants’ levels of hope tended to be dynamic rather than static, with hope fluctuating either modestly or strongly over time. Having formerly used the terms “high” and “low” to describe some of the participants whose scores on measures of hope and social connectedness fell within certain pre-determined criteria, I decided to change this terminology to “higher” and “lower,” in order to stress the interactive nature of hope and to avoid establishing labels that imply that hope is a fixed attribute, or that there is some

arbitrary cut-off point that distinguishes high from low hope. Readers should therefore consider these terms to represent a range of hope that varies within as well as between individuals, depending on their interpretation of novel situations, the meaning that they derive from challenging events, and their decision whether or not to move forward.

### **Purpose of this Study**

Researchers investigating hope in the psychological literature have predominantly used quantitative methodologies, commonly utilizing a self-report instrument derived from the hope model of Snyder and his colleagues (Snyder et al., 1991), of which more shortly. This contrasts with the nursing literature where, as reported by Farran, Herth, and Popovich (1995), “qualitative studies have contributed a great deal of depth and breadth to our understanding of hope,” (p. 153) within clinical populations. Given the extensive literature on hope that spans almost 3,000 years, it was not the goal of my study to reconfirm what we already know about hope, but to get at the subtle nuances of this abstract construct that would not be possible with quantitative data. Because my overall aim was to understand better the intrapersonal and interpersonal differences between higher and lower hope individuals facing similar experiences of challenge and uncertainty, I designed my study to be largely qualitative using grounded theory analyses (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Nevertheless, I used a self-report measure in order to sample purposively a subset of participants who appeared to be either exhibiting higher hope or lower hope. This dissertation presents the results of this approach.

### **What Is Hope?**

But what is *hope*, a question that was posed by humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow (Maslow, 1970) almost four decades ago? Hope is one of the most common words in the English language (Thorndike & Lorge, 1944), yet it is arguably one of the most abstract and complex, given its “multi-dimensional” nature (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985). As a precursor to answering that question, I wish to emphasize that this study does not concern the “trivial hopes” (Godfrey, 1987, p. 14) of comments such as, “I hope to do this for a long time to come” (Profile of Shell Oil president, HR Magazine, April 2006);

“We hope a majority will show enough restraint to strip out some of the worst pork” (Op Ed, The Washington Post, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006); or even “I hope it doesn’t rain today.” The use of the word *hope* in such contexts expresses a preference or point of view but reveals little or nothing about the deeper subjective experience of the speaker. Rather, my interest lies in the hope associated with challenge and uncertainty, as in these quotes: “Bulgaria’s abandoned children are not without hope, however. With help, their lives could dramatically improve” (*The Plight of Bulgaria’s Lost Children*, Sunday Times, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2006); “It’s obviously life changing, even for an old reporter like me, to see what was going on there...to see the lack of hope in the eyes...” (transcribed from an interview with Nick Clooney by Katie Couric on the Today Show, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2006); or “After decades of dictatorship, Mr. Aristide’s election inspired hope” (*At last, a bridge of sorts to the future*, The Economist, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006).

In my search for a preliminary definition of hope that would help frame the parameters of my study, I decided upon two things. First, I determined that I was going to take an interdisciplinary approach and broaden my review of the literature to embrace philosophical and medical health perspectives on hope, and not just those within the psychological arena. Hence, in Chapter Two I have drawn from expositions about hope from philosophers ranging from Aristotle (Kennedy, 1991) to Godfrey (1987), from the extensive nursing literature on hope (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Morse & Doberneck, 1995; Penrod & Morse, 1997), as well as various psychological models (Averill, Catlin, & Chon, 1990; Bruininks & Malle, 2005; Scioli & Biller, n.d.; Snyder, et al., 1991).

It has long been my view that contemporary postulations are not necessarily better but frequently add layers of complexity that can obscure the essential characteristics or accepted truth about a concept. For example, in examining contemporary psychological and nursing literatures, I found 18 different conceptualizations of hope (see Table 1.1), many of them with associated instruments. Which to choose? Should I accept that hope is comprised of two components (Snyder et al., 1991), three factors (Miller & Powers, 1988), four rules (Averill et al., 1990), five themes (Herth, 1991; 1992), or seven components (Morse & Doberneck, 1995)? Or is it the uni-dimensional construct posited

by Menninger (1959), Mowrer (1960), and Stotland (1969)? As I describe later in this chapter, I chose to be guided by a conceptualization of hope written eight centuries ago, because it elegantly and comprehensively articulated certain commonly agreed-upon core aspects of hope that provided me with some guiding themes on which to focus, at least initially.

**Table 1.1 Current Conceptualizations and Operationalizations of Hope**

<b>Theorists</b>	<b>Conceptualization of Hope</b>	<b>Operationalization</b>
Stotland, 1969	An expectation greater than zero of achieving a goal	None
Gottschalk, 1974	“A measure of optimism that a favorable outcome is likely to occur not only in one’s personal earthly activities but also in cosmic phenomena and even in spiritual or imaginary events.” (p. 779)	Verbal content analysis scale
Erickson, Post and Paige, 1975	A combination of the importance of goals and the probability of attaining them (expectancy x value) – based on Stotland’s hope theory	30-item self report scale
Obayuwana and Carter, 1982	Future expectancies	60-item dichotomous questionnaire
Stoner, 1982	Probability of attaining future-oriented goals (based on Stotland’s theory)	30-item self-report scale
Mercier, Fawcett, and Clark, 1984	Modification of Beck’s (1974) Hopelessness Scale	Hopefulness Scale, 20-item self-report
Grimm, 1984	Future orientation, planning of goals, taking action, and relationships	State-Trait Hope Inventory, two 20-item self-report scales
Dufault and Martocchio, 1985	“A multidimensional life force characterized by a confident yet uncertain expectation of achieving good that, to the hoping person, is realistically possible and personally significant.” (p. 380)	None
Miller and Powers, 1988	“Characterized by an anticipation for a continued good state, an improved state, or a release from perceived entrapment.” (p. 10)	Miller Hope Scale, 40-item self-report
Staats, 2001	An interaction between particular wishes and expectations of their occurrence (i.e., expectancy x value).	Hope Index, 16 goal statements, self-report
Nowotny, 1989	A multidimensional dynamic attribute of an individual, involving: active involvement, confidence, relating to others, spiritual beliefs, comes from within, future is possible.	Nowotny Hope Scale, 29-item self-report

*continued on next page*

**Table 1.1 Current Conceptualizations and Operationalizations of Hope, continued**

Theorists	Conceptualization of Hope	Operationalization
Averill et al., 1990	Emotion-focused theory based on four “rules” of hope: a) probability of goal attainment is realistic (prudential rule); b) what is hoped for is deemed to be personally or socially acceptable (moralistic rule); c) outcomes and events are appraised as important (priority rule); d) there is a willingness to take appropriate action (action rule).	None
Herth, 1991, 1992	Based on Dufault and Martocchio’s (1985) definition of hope	Herth Hope Scale (HHS), 30-item self report; Herth Hope Index, 12-item adapted version of the HHS
Hinds and Gattuso, 1991	The degree to which an adolescent possesses a comforting or life-sustaining, reality-based belief that a positive future exists for self or others.	Hopefulness Scale for Adolescents, 24-item self-report
Snyder, et al., 1991	A reciprocally-derived sense of successful agency (goal-directed determination) and successful pathways (planning of ways to meet goals).	Hope Scale, 12-item (4 of which are fillers) self-report
Morse and Doberneck, 1995	Seven components: 1) a realistic initial assessment of the predicament or threat; 2) the envisioning of alternatives and the setting of goals 3) a bracing for negative outcomes 4) a realistic assessment of personal resources and of external conditions and resources 5) the solicitation of mutually supportive relationships 6) the continuous evaluation for signs that reinforce the selected goals 7) a determination to endure	Penrod and Morse’s (1997) Hope Assessment Guide
Bruininks and Malle, 2005	“An emotion that occurs when an individual is focused on an important future outcome that allows for little personal control, so the person is unable to take much action to realize the outcome.” (p. 348)	Hopefulness Measure, 24-item self report.
Scioli and Biller, 2007	A multi-level system of beliefs, feelings, and behaviors centered around four themes: mastery, attachment, and survival.	The Comprehensive Hope Scales: State Hope (40 items, 10 subscales); Trait Hope (56 items, 14 subscales).

Second, I was informed by Russell’s (1989) observation that “Words do not mean whatever we psychologists want them to mean. When we ask a man how anxious he feels, or a woman how stressed she feels, their answers depend on what they take the

words *anxiety* and *stress* to mean” (p. 107). Hence an additional determination was to ensure I did not lose sight of lay understandings of hope by focusing only on scientific conceptualizations. As Lazarus (1999) has stated, “In psychology it often seems that we are constantly coining new words to describe the same old ideas, and using the same old words to articulate new ideas” (p. 659). To me, hope has been similarly treated by psychologists. However, rather than taking a centuries-old word from the English language and affording it a completely new meaning, as was done with the term *depression* in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, my concern was that the most extensively cited and widely regarded model of hope (Snyder, 1994, 2002; Snyder et al., 1991) appeared only partially to acknowledge what hope is. Given the scientific goal of parsimony, I can understand the appeal of defining hope as “an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)” (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991, p. 287). Nevertheless, such a definition is problematic in that it fails to account for the social and contextual influences affecting hope that have been articulated in the philosophical and nursing literatures, and that were of additional interest to me.

The definition of hope I decided to use as a guiding principle at the commencement of my study was that of the Italian philosopher Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) who wrote that hope was a passion (emotion) and a virtue, the object of which was a future good that while difficult was still considered possible to obtain (Aquinas, trans.1947). While I did not expect my participants to have the same hoped-for goal as Aquinas, namely communion with God, nevertheless his definition of hope contributed to my study in terms of articulating four themes that helped frame the initial interviews. As can be seen from Table 1.1, these themes are consistent with contemporary definitions, namely that hope concerns:

- The *future*, broadened in the context of my study to cover temporality generally;
- An outcome that is judged to be *good*;
- A process that is *arduous* and hence not easily or immediately attainable;
- Outcomes that are perceived to be *possible*, albeit of low to moderate probability.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided my inquiry:

- 1) What are the different ways in which higher and lower hope participants think about and connect their past, present, and future?
- 2) What is the relationship between levels of hope and social connectedness? How is that social/contextual relationship manifested in terms of the number and nature of relationships with parents or caregivers, friends, and significant others?
- 3) How do the higher and lower hope groups differentially view challenge and adversity and, in determining what is or is not possible for them, how does this influence the educational and career goals they choose to pursue?

## **Organization of Dissertation**

I began my investigation by reviewing the literature on hope spanning several millennia and different perspectives, from ancient Greek mythology to modern-day psychology, in order to outline the current understanding of what hope is and how it manifests itself in people's lives. That review can be found in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, I describe the methods and procedures I used in order to gather and analyze quantitative and qualitative data from 76 young adults across four field sites, conducted over a period of approximately 12 months, from Fall 2006 through Fall 2007. Chapter Four introduces data from 13 members of the lower hope, higher hope, and "changer" groups that emerged from my grounded theory analysis. These data were selected to illustrate the participants' different perceptions of uncertainty, the strategies they used to negotiate difficult situations, and their overall perspective on life. I developed an inductively-derived model of hope from those data and introduce those five themes in Chapter Five, namely:

- The Initiating Context: Perceptions of challenge and uncertainty
- Temporal Comparisons: Envisioning the future, being realistic about the present, learning from the past
- Developing Strategies: Values, goals, planning, and action
- Drawing on personal and social resources



- Openness and flexibility about outcomes

In order to test the emergent model for generalizability, I then interviewed a small group of young adults from a separate field site, and these data are presented also in Chapter Five. Finally, in Chapter Six, I discuss my findings in light of this new inductively-derived model of hope as it related to the lives of American young adults.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The pool of information that was available for this review spanned almost 3,000 years, with postulations on hope spreading across philosophical, theological, psychiatric, nursing, and psychological literatures. In addition were the “lay” voices on hope by storytellers, essayists, poets, musicians, and others that I believed should not be ignored. As remarked upon in the previous chapter, what good is a theory of hope that bears little or no resemblance to the hope that people generally recognize? Stemming from my belief that an authentic and authoritative hope model needs to integrate understanding from a multiplicity of perspectives, the potential therefore existed for me to write a literature review of encyclopedic proportions. As important and personally fascinating as that might have been, that is a work for a later time.

In order to work within relevant but not unduly limiting boundaries, while at the same time being realistic about space constraints, I have organized this chapter around the key aspects of a theoretical process model. Each of the three sections offered in this chapter, therefore, draws on existing literatures to answer questions that will help to: a) clarify our current understanding of hope; b) illustrate why an integrative approach to hope is important; c) highlight where gaps in our current knowledge exist; and d) support the methodological approach that I took in my study.

These three sections each address the following:

- 1) What are the environmental and personal antecedents of hope? In other words, who hopes, when is hope salient, and for what do we typically hope?
- 2) What cognitive, emotional, motivational, and behavioral factors occur in the process of hoping? In short, how do we hope?
- 3) What are the behavioral and psychological outcomes or consequences of hope under conditions of success and failure? What does this tell us about why we hope?

Before introducing the first section, however, I believe it is important to lay out key assumptions that underpinned my exploration.

- 1) Hope is a convenient “shorthand term” (Eliot & Olver, 2002, p. 190) used to describe a complex, multidimensional construct. Hence, I believe that research into hope is best served by eschewing any single theoretical psychological perspective or explanatory paradigm and by viewing it through the widest possible lens. As such, this review of the literature embraces cognition, emotion, motivation, volition, behavior, as well as the social nature of hope.
- 2) Hope, at least in its most common form as a verb, is a process not an outcome. Although this distinction is not always clearly explicated in the psychological literature on hope, it is a recurring theme for researchers in the nursing field (e.g., Dufault & Martocchio 1985; Penrod & Morse, 1997), thereby demonstrating the importance of taking a broader, more integrative view across literatures.
- 3) Hope has consequences that transcend the mere attainment of personally important goals. As such, hope is concerned with issues of meaning that have been addressed in philosophical explications of hope, as well as the spiritual aspects that have been of interest to various philosophers, nurse researchers, and theologians.

Hope may well be universally experienced, as many commentators across time and cultures have suggested, but it is also uniquely interpreted across cultures. As Averill et al. (1990) discovered in their studies, the meaning of hope in the United States compared with the way it was conceived in Korea differed to a considerable extent. For that reason, not least because all my study participants regardless of ethnicity were born and raised in America, this review of the literature focuses only on Western explications of hope. Even so, our journey spans a variety of cultures across many thousands of years.

### **The Antecedents of Hope**

This section concerns the question, “under what environmental and personal conditions is hope elicited?” The evidence I present here was meant to address the issues

of who hopes, when do they hope, and for what do they hope? I began by casting my investigative net back almost 3,000 years, since the answers to some of these questions can be gleaned in the mythology of the ancient Greeks.

### *The Ancient Greeks and Hope*

The earliest known reference to hope in Western literature can be found in *Works and Days*, an epic poem written by the ancient Greek Hesiod (c. 700 BCE). Of course *hope*, being a word derived from the much later Old English term *hopa* suggesting leaping (or hopping) with expectation, does not appear specifically in that work. The ancient Greek term that is believed to translate most directly to hope is *elpis*.

In these 800-verses, Hesiod attempted to explain why human beings face such a hard life. It is here that we are introduced to the story of Pandora, a mythical beauty who shares certain similarities with the Biblical character of Eve. Pandora, the first woman, whose name means “all gifts,” was said to have been created by Zeus. She was sent to earth to marry Prometheus who had angered the gods by stealing their special possession, fire, and making it available to man. Similar to an implication within the story of Adam and Eve about the role of women in men’s lives, the Pandora myth told that she was sent to earth to bring Prometheus lifelong misery. Instead of an apple, however, Prometheus’ intended bride was in possession of a *pithos* or huge jar used for storing grain.

Prometheus (literally, *foresight*) rejected Pandora, however, passing her off to his brother Epimetheus (or *hindsight*). Although Pandora had been warned not to open the *pithos*, the young woman’s curiosity got the better of her and upon doing so she was said to have allowed all the evils, diseases, and ills of the world to fly out, never to be recaptured. The only creature left, stuck under the rim of the jar, was *elpis* or hope. In Hesiod’s poetic way this symbolized the ancient Greeks’ ambiguity concerning hope: was it to be regarded as simply another ill or as a way of coping with their deleterious effects?

We cannot understand the ancient Greeks’ skeptical regard for hope without first taking into account their pragmatic, if not pessimistic, worldview. Life at that time was generally experienced as short, harsh, and beyond an individual’s personal control.

Human destinies were considered to be at the mercy of capricious gods who could bestow generosity or wreak havoc on lives without warning. If, as Menninger (1959) posited over two millennia later, hope motivates an individual to be “not as a mere spectator of cosmic events, but as a prime mover” (p. 490), then it is perhaps not surprising that hope would present the ancient Greek mind with a quandary. They accepted that hoping was an inevitable human characteristic, being “apportioned to all mortals” as Euripedes (480-406BCE) wrote in *The Trojan Women*, but the ancient Greek ambivalence toward hope stems from their extremely pragmatic view of life. Because future outcomes can never be confidently predicted, particularly concerning warfare, the ancient Greeks took the view that being overconfident and having an unrealistic expectation of the future would lead to disaster.

If we assume, as later writers have postulated, that the role of hope “is not to predict and control the future but to create it by exploring the unknown and bringing to life that which is still only a potentiality” (Ludema, 1996), then this would have directly contradicted the largely pre-destined beliefs that the ancient Greeks held about life. What then should they trust? Should they put their faith in something that “comes close to being the very heart and center of a human being” (Lynch, 1969, p. 31) and invest in their hopes, or accept that their lives were to be decided upon at the whim of the gods? In many respects it benefited the ancient Greeks to place a reduced emphasis on hope, given that their version of the afterlife tended to be bleaker even than that of their everyday lives. This contrasted with the later appropriation of hope by the early Christian church who labeled hope a “virtue,” thereby appealing to the disenfranchised who could expect a future reward when they reached heaven.

Irrespective of whichever of these worldviews one ascribes to, we can begin to see why hope has long been associated with negative emotions including fear (Gravlee, 2000), anxiety (Zaleski, 1994), and despair (Lazarus, 1999). While hope is commonly regarded as an antidote for otherwise despairing circumstances, as some of the interpretations of the Pandora myth suggest, others have nevertheless maintained the belief that hope was just a cruel trick that the gods had sent to torture the human mind.

For example, Nietzsche (1878, cited in Menninger, 1959), considered hope to be “the worst of evils” because it “prolonged the torment of man” (p. 483). To further illustrate these polarized views, in some languages the term hope was derived from the Latin root *spes*, from which we get such words as *despair*, *desperate*, but also *prosperity*.

Several hundred years after Hesiod’s interpretation, the historian Thucydides (c. 460-c. 395BC) articulated a means by which the conflict between hope and the largely pessimistic ancient Greek worldview could be mediated. His *History of the Peloponnesian War* was a commentary on how human communities typically reached decisions in times of stress and uncertainty and included several references to *elpis* or hope. In those passages, Thucydides reinforced the view that whereas human beings could not help but hope for something positive, they should guard against having unrealistic expectations of the future because such outcomes can never be confidently anticipated. The consideration of what is or is not realistic in relation to hope has divided philosophers and will be explored in more detail in a later section.

In the meantime, the Pandora myth has suggested that all human beings cannot help but hope. Let me now address the extent to which that is supported by later explications.

### ***Who Hopes?***

Foreshadowing the 19<sup>th</sup> century American poet, Emily Dickinson, who wrote that “Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul, and sings the tune without the words and never stops at all,” there was an appreciation even in ancient times that hope is a universal human experience. This has been supported empirically by Averill et al. (1990) who studied how hope is described using certain linguistic forms. For example, they reported that the most common way of describing hope, metaphorically, was as a “vital principle” (p. 54), i.e., essential to life. Additionally, Averill and his colleagues discovered that hope is a sustaining force, elevating and supporting us so that “one need not wander in darkness, nor be paralyzed (“frozen”) in dread” (Averill et al., 1990, p. 59). Indeed, in both ancient and modern times, hope was typically written about in connection with adverse situations representing uncertain outcomes that, without hope, would lead

only to fear, anxiety, or despair. This issue will be further examined in the portion of this chapter that reviews when hope is most salient.

Thucydides had introduced a temporal quality in his reference to hope's association with future expectations. Lynch (1965) broadened that temporal focus when he suggested that hope was analogous to scientific hypothesizing. As such the hopeful individual, in an effort to bring about a desired outcome, draws on existing knowledge, reviews what might be accomplished in the present, and anticipates the actions necessary to achieve a future result, thereby utilizing the past, the present, and the future.

When reviewing the earliest developmental state for who hopes, I was reminded of the formal operations stage in Piaget's theory of cognitive development, given that this stage demonstrated "the ability to reason with abstract, hypothetical, and contrary-to-fact information" (Ormrod, 2004, p. 167). As Trommsdorff (1983) has articulated, "formal operational intelligence enables the child to anticipate consequences and to think in terms of future possibilities" (p. 389), factors that commonly are considered salient to hope. Given that Piaget postulated that this final cognitive stage occurred at around "11 or 12 years of age" (Ormrod, 2004, p. 167), this appears to imply that very young children do not possess the ability to hope. However, according to Erikson (1963) hope is developed in infancy through an optimal balance of trust and mistrust experiences. Regardless of the precise developmental appearance of hope however, I felt confident that the potential to hope would be available to the sample of 18-22 years old young adults who were to be the participants in my study. If I could identify the conditions under which hope was most likely to be in evidence, I would then be able to select those likely to exhibit various levels of hope.

### ***Summarizing "Who Hopes?"***

This brief excursion through the history of hope suggested that the answer to the question "who hopes?" is that we all have a universally acknowledged propensity for hoping. What appeared to be involved was the ability to project the imagination into the future in order to anticipate desired outcomes that, given certain conditions of uncertainty, might otherwise result in unfulfilled desires and the potential for despair.

Having addressed some of the personal antecedents of hope, and in order to uncover some of its situational antecedents, I now outline the particular circumstances under which hope appears to be most salient.

### ***When Do We Hope?***

Even if hope is a universal experience, do we hope all the time? To answer *yes* seems out of step with lay experiences of hope that suggest it is most commonly elicited under conditions of difficulty and uncertainty. Yet most of our current understanding of hope, at least in the psychological literature, is based on cross-sectional, correlational studies among college students using trait hope instruments developed from conceptualizing hope as a “relatively stable personality disposition (i.e., a trait),” (Lopez, et al., 2004, p. 390). Examples of such studies indicated that hope is associated with various kinds of academic achievement, optimal physical health, and psychological adjustment (see Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2005, for a review), prompting Peterson and Seligman (2004) to label hope a “Velcro” construct, because so many outcomes appear to stick to it, albeit “for reasons that are not always apparent” (p. 577). In contrast, the nursing literature is replete with studies that are focused more on hope’s relevance to individuals facing a variety of life-threatening, high stress conditions (see Farran, et al., 1995 for a review).

Bruininks addressed the issue that hope concerned “vital” matters (Averill et al., 1990; Godfrey, 1987) and is elicited only under specific conditions, while still using the readily-available pool of college students typically utilized as participants in many psychological studies. She prefixed many of the items in her Hopefulness Measure with the conditions under which hope might be considered salient, such as, “When everything looks bad...,” “When faced with possible failure...,” and “When an outcome is uncertain...”

Setting aside the trait-state issue that will be addressed in greater detail in the final section of this chapter, I now focus on one of the most enduring themes of hope, ergo its association with future outcomes that by their very nature are uncertainly attained.



### *Hope and Uncertainty*

As Godfrey (1987) has pointed out, “To hope is to risk” (p. 221), including the risk of being disappointed. Stated in a more positive light, Lynch (1965) articulated that hope was concerned with a “sense of the possible” (p. 32). *Possibility* and *probability* both stem from Latin words, the former meaning *to be able* suggesting something with the potential to exist in the future, while the latter is derived from *to prove* and is concerned with the appearance of truth or knowledge that one might derive from the past or have in the present. Hence the quote in Romans 8:24 that “hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees?” The implication here, then, is that hope is not necessarily evidence-based, a belief that has found support in secular arenas. However, hope still must be sufficiently motivating for us to expend time and effort in the pursuit of outcomes that may occur but just as likely may not. Findings articulated by Averill et al. (1990) led these authors to conclude that one of the most important features of hope was its salience to personally important objects or events. This lends further support to my contention that, while we commonly use the word *hope* when referring to a desire that the weather stays fine, or that we reach an appointment on time, the hope that is worthy of serious investigation “concerns matters of vital interest” (Averill et al., 1990, p. 13).

Returning to the issue of possibility, considerable empirical evidence exists to support the notion that hope is irrevocably linked with uncertainty generally. But what degree of uncertainty is required for hope to be salient, rather than to be optimistic or to wish for something instead? While investigating the dimension of subjective likelihood associated with a variety of different emotions, appraisal theorists Smith and Ellsworth (1985) found that hope, along with frustration, fell within a mid-range of uncertainty. Hope was not associated with the high uncertainty typifying fear, but neither was it as close to certainty as happiness and pride, despite sharing similar levels of moderately high attention.

The general finding that “moderate uncertainty” was associated with hope (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985, p. 832) has been supported in a number of other studies. Based on the

results of questionnaire studies that combined rating scales, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions, for example, Averill et al. (1990) discovered that participants were most likely to hope, rather than to want or to desire, when the chances of realizing a hoped-for object were high enough for it to appear possible (i.e., were somewhat realistic or feasible), but were not so high that the outcome could be confidently predicted, as with optimism.

Using a different methodology and multidimensional scaling, Bruininks and Malle (2005) supported these earlier findings about the relationship between hope and intermediate levels of uncertainty. These researchers presented participants with stories that had been generated previously by individuals who had written about specific times when they had experienced hope or a number of closely-related states, including optimism, wishing, desire, and joy. After reading representative samples of such stories, the participants were asked to identify which of the six possible states they thought had been described. Bruininks and Malle (2005) then used multidimensional scaling to depict where each of these different states fell on dimensions of subjective likelihood and perceived control. In accordance with previously-mentioned studies, hope was located within a mid-range of subjective likelihood. In common with wishing, hope was also shown to involve a relatively low level of perceived control.

Not surprisingly, there have been a number of empirical connections made between the uncertainty inherent in hope and an individual's varying perceptions of control. As Smith and Ellsworth (1985) explicated in their appraisal-focused studies, hope appeared to be most typical in situations that were perceived to be outside the direct control of the individual, such as waiting to hear news about a college application, or the results of a friend's surgery. Nevertheless, when questioning participants about the extent to which they perceived themselves as able to control the outcomes associated with their hopes, Averill et al. (1990) found that these levels varied according to the nature of the goal. For example, participants rated themselves as having more personal control over achievement goals such as academic or athletic success than "altruistic hopes" (p. 15) that involved waiting to hear about the recovery of a significant other from a major illness. In

conclusion, Averill et al. (1990) posited that hope is context-specific not because of the type of events that elicit hope but because of the high personal importance invested in the outcome, combined with the extent to which the individual perceived him or her self to have some control over its realization. Such specificity of personal importance and perceived control are, I would suggest, difficult to capture when simply administering hope instruments to participants unless, of course, those participants are primed to think about something that captured those two dimensions of hope beforehand. Typically, however, trait hope measures require participants to respond to items in relation to ways that they generally think or behave, as is the case with Snyder's hope scale (Snyder et al., 1991).

Before summarizing where we stand so far in our understanding of the situational and personal factors believed to contribute to the antecedents of hope, let me first use the adaptive value of hope in specific circumstances to address the difference between hope and the closely-related construct with which it is most frequently confused, optimism.

### *Hope Distinguished from Optimism*

As Averill and his colleagues (Averill et al., 1990) have concluded, "More than any other variable, probability of attainment may be a stable characteristic of hope" (p. 17). Hope is thus believed to be salient in relation to objects or events that fall within a mid-range of probabilities. Thus, I would argue that Stotland's (1969) definition of hope as "an expectation greater than zero that a goal can be achieved," is not accurate in that it implies that an expectation close to or reaching 100% would also signal hope. Stotland's work *The Psychology of Hope* has been highly influential and several later models, including that of Snyder (1994, 2002) were built on its cognitive-motivational foundation.

However, Stotland's previously-mentioned definition of hope may have helped inadvertently to fuel the tendency of psychologists and psychiatrists (e.g., Gottschalk, 1974; Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006; Polivy & Herman, 2000; Tiger, 1979) to discuss hope and optimism as if they were synonymous. Even the American

Psychological Association's *Dictionary of Psychology* (2007) concludes the section on hope with "see also Optimism" (p. 447).

As seems intuitively obvious, optimism would be expected to have a linear relationship with subjective probability in that the higher the perceived chance of realizing a goal, the greater the degree of one's optimism. In contrast, hope would have a curvilinear relationship in that, as the perceived probability of success becomes higher, that is, as the goal comes close to being assured, there is no need to hope. This supposition has been supported by the findings of Averill et al. (1990) given that by far the most common reason why participants stopped hoping was because they had obtained whatever it was they had been hoping for.

A series of studies investigating "the conceptual and psychological differences between hope and related mental states" by Bruininks and Malle (2005, p. 327) similarly found that hope and optimism were "clearly" distinguishable from each other "by people themselves" (p. 349), if not by psychologists. Some of these differences will be discussed in the next section when I address the process of hope, including the finding that participants considered hope to be an emotion and optimism to be a cognitive process. With respect to the current topics of uncertainty, control, and situational context, some key findings are worth referencing here, however.

First, optimism was considered by the participants in the Bruininks and Malle (2005) studies to be context-independent, that is, seen as existing without being caused by any particular event. This is in keeping with Carver and Scheier's (2005) definition of optimism as "the expectation of good outcomes" (p. 233). Second, and in accordance with what I have suggested about the linear relationship between optimism and subjective likelihood, optimism was found to be more salient when there was a "substantial likelihood of the outcome occurring" (Bruininks & Malle, 2005, p. 339). Third, and linked to the second finding, participants were most likely to be optimistic over situations in which they perceived themselves to have higher levels of control. Finally, the things about which individuals were optimistic were considered less important than those for which they hoped.

### ***Summary of “When Do We Hope?”***

To summarize the findings from this portion of the chapter, it appears that hope is salient in conditions where the anticipated outcomes are considered to be of high personal importance. This suggests that hope would also be associated with a sense of commitment and thus higher likelihood of action on the part of the hoper. This topic will be further explored in the next section on the process of hope. Additionally, hope is contextual in that it is most likely to be elicited during conditions of moderate uncertainty, in which individuals perceive themselves to have varying moderate to low control over influencing the attainment of the outcome. Hence, hope should be more associated with what is considered possible rather than highly probable, a factor that helps to distinguish hope from optimism.

Nevertheless, in cases articulated in the field of nursing, hope has been found to defiantly endure in situations where both personal control and the probability of a desired outcome are extremely low. For example, Eliot and Olver (2002) reported that when faced with making end-of-life decisions, many participants maintained a “glimmer of hope” that remained with them until the last, “proving surprisingly resilient, with doctors unable to remove patients’ hope, even if that hope does not concur with medical opinion” (p. 182). This leaves the issue of perceived control and subjective likelihood open to further examination, and I will return to this in the next section.

Having offered a preliminary review of responses to the questions, “who hopes?” and “when?”, I now turn to the final question in this section, “for what do we hope?”

### ***Hoped-For Goals***

It is perhaps not surprising that in the contemporary psychological literature hope has been so closely linked with the attainment of goals. As William James articulated (1890, cited in Austin & Vancouver, 1996, p. 338), “The pursuance of future ends and the choice of means for their attainment are the mark and criterion of the presence of mentality in a phenomenon.”

Certainly, the most influential and extensively-cited cognitive-motivational model of hope articulated within the contemporary psychological literature, that of C.R. Snyder

(e.g., 1994, 2002; Snyder et al., 1991) outlined two components or “means” by which such “future ends” or goals are pursued. Before addressing Snyder’s hope model in more detail, however, let me begin with a brief review of the theory of Ezra Stotland, who was mentioned briefly earlier and whose work entitled *The Psychology of Hope* was influential in Snyder’s approach.

We have already ascertained in earlier sections that hope concerns moderately uncertain goals, possible if not probable, that imply varying levels of personal control but are pursued because of their importance to the person who hopes. Similarly, Stotland’s (1969) learning theory analysis of hope was focused largely on the perceived probability and perceived importance of goals. As a past president of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, Ezra Stotland was perhaps better known for his articles on white-collar crime. However, *The Psychology of Hope* was the final book in a co-authored trilogy whose first two volumes had referenced a spate of suicides by mentally-ill patients, during which time Stotland had recognized that hope was of great significance for those in mental turmoil. He explained that, “With little hope, there is little basis for actively dealing with the world” (Stotland, 1969, p. 158). To Stotland, the loss of hope and psychosis were inextricably intertwined to the extent that he believed that low expectations of goal attainment had more to do with the condition of schizophrenics than neurological disorders.

Stotland’s work offered an analysis of the schemas or cognitive concepts by which we might recognize hope as hope and not as some other construct. As Stotland (1969) noted, a large number of the events that human beings encounter every day have ambiguous outcomes. He went on to argue that since we can never totally predict what the future holds, the extent to which we consider future events as being potentially hopeful or hopeless depended on perceptions that were influenced by schemas. Stotland offered seven propositions that addressed the development of hope schemas, but it is the first two that are most salient to the topic of goals that I am addressing in this section.

According to Stotland’s first proposition, hope provided the motivation to pursue goals in relation to the perceived probability of success and the perceived importance of

those goals. That much we have already deduced from the evidence provided in previous sections of this chapter. Stotland also postulated that hopefulness was a necessary condition for action, contradicting the commonly-cited aphorism that “he who lives by hope will die of hunger” (Averill et al., 1990, p. 56). Describing the iterative effect of hope, Stotland described how the low-hope schemas of schizophrenics predisposed them to believe that their actions would have little or no effect in achieving their goals, thus exacerbating their sense of hopelessness. By guiding them toward taking more successful actions, however, therapists were able to raise their levels of motivation and hope. For example, Stotland (1969) cited an experiment in which, by treating mental patients as increasingly responsible, their sense of hopefulness increased. These individuals were not only able to be discharged from the mental hospital faster than the control group, but they remained outside of that institution for longer periods of time.

These three ideas namely, action, perceived probability, and goal importance, were the key features of Snyder’s (e.g., Snyder et al., 1991) later theory. Before leaving Stotland for the moment, however, two further issues concerning hope should be noted to highlight several important ways in which Snyder’s hope theory differed from Stotland’s (1969) approach.

In his second proposition, Stotland stated that as the individual’s subjective likelihood of achieving an important goal increased, so too did the positive affect experienced. Although it was not stated in terms of a proposition, Stotland’s observations concerning the influence that therapists had on their patients’ levels of hopefulness suggested an interpersonal factor contributing to hope. This is an issue that has received considerable focus in both the philosophical, nursing, psychiatric, and other medical health literatures on hope but has largely been neglected in Snyder’s model, leading Aspinwall and Leaf (2002) to comment on its “unnecessarily limiting...strongly individualistic view of hope” (p. 284).

Having established, at least according to psychological explications, that hope is concerned with the pursuit and attainment of possible and personally important goals, the remainder of this section focuses on three characteristics of hoped-for goals: 1) their

difficulty; 2) approach goals versus avoidance goals; and 3) their moral or virtuous focus. A fourth characteristic concerning the extent to which hoped-for goals are realistic is arguably implied by their “possibility.” Nevertheless, I will address this issue further in the next section when I investigate what the literature suggests about the relationship between hope, self-efficacy, and mastery.

### ***The Challenge of Hoped-For Goals***

Snyder’s hope theory postulated that:

...hope reflects individuals’ perceptions of their capacities to (1) clearly conceptualize goals; (2) develop the specific strategies to reach those goals (pathways thinking); and (3) initiate and sustain the motivation for using those strategies (agency thinking). The pathways and agency components are both necessary, but neither by itself is sufficient to sustain successful goal pursuit. As such, pathways and agency thoughts are additive, reciprocal, and positively related, but they are not synonymous. (Lopez et al., 2004, p. 388)

In describing the nature of the goals that individuals hope for, these authors posit that they can be both long-term and have an importance that extends beyond the individuals themselves such as “developing a comprehensive theory of human motivation,” or be as short-lived and trivial as “getting a ride to school” (Lopez et al., 2004, p. 388). The inclusion of trivial hopes, however, is problematic in relation to the argument I made in Chapter One that has been supported by philosophical postulations on hope, in that these more mundane hopes tell us more about an individual’s personal preferences than the “vital” nature of the hope (Averill et al., 1990; Godfrey, 1987) and the deeper subjective experience I am interested in studying. According to Lopez et al. (2004), the subjective likelihood of goal attainment can “vary from very low to very high” (p. 389). Yet, as numerous theoretical postulations and empirical findings have attested, hope fails to be salient when expected probabilities are “very high.”

As their uncertain nature implies, hoped-for goals have been long considered to be difficult to attain. It was perhaps because of its arduous nature that the Italian theologian Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) wrote about hope in relation to the goal of communion with God. Findings reported by Snyder (e.g., Snyder et al., 1991) have



suggested that the higher an individual's level of hope, the greater the likelihood that the person would actively choose more difficult goals over easier alternatives. This assertion was based on a study that used an early version of the Snyder Hope Scale (Harris, 1988) and reported correlations of  $r = .45, p < .001$  between participants' Hope Scale scores and their selection of experimental tasks ranging from easy to very difficult. One further aspect concerning the difficulty of hope objects that is extensively explicated in Snyder's hope theory, and will be addressed in the section on the process of hope, concerns overcoming obstacles or barriers that might otherwise hinder the "pathways" leading to goal attainment.

Related to the issue that hoped-for goals are difficult to attain, hope has been frequently associated with the coping strategies that individuals might use "as a successful vehicle for goal clarification and pursuit" (Stanton, Parsa, & Austenfeld, 2005, p. 153). Coping has been defined as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141).

Within the coping literature, researchers have concerned themselves with outcomes that are associated with approach or avoidance goals. As Snyder (2002) has articulated, "avoidance and disengaged coping generally has counterproductive consequences" (p. 261). As such, we would not expect higher hope individuals to focus on avoidance goals, given Snyder and Rand's (2003) report that in over 50 separate studies, higher levels of hope were shown to be associated with positive outcomes in the areas of academics, sport, health, and psychotherapy. As Snyder, Feldman, Taylor, Schroeder, and Adams (2000) have suggested, however, "the increased anxiety level of the low-hope individual may trigger avoidant coping" (p. 259).

### ***Approach or Avoidance Goals?***

In an early contemporary exposition on hope, Korner (1970) considered the adaptive value of hope to be both as a defense against despair, doubt, and fear (i.e., an avoidance strategy) and a means by which "desired future gratification" (an approach goal) allowed for "an immediate relief for current discomfort" (p. 136). Lazarus (1991)

similarly articulated that hope involved both approach and avoidance coping when he maintained that hope involved constructive efforts in goal pursuit when one is “fearing the worst but yearning for better” (p. 282). As additional support for the suggestion that hope involves both moving away from and moving toward certain goals, Nesse’s (1999) “behavioral ecology of hope and despair” (p. 442) posited that hope, along with its negative counterpart despair, inhabited a “middle realm” that is concerned both with the desire to achieve happiness (when a goal is reached) or to experience relief (after avoiding loss), “when efforts are ongoing but the goal is not yet reached nor recognized as impossible” (p. 442). What seems to me to be suggested by that last explication, together with those of Korner (1970) and Lazarus (1991), is that the process of hoping more generally involves both approaching positive emotions and avoiding negative emotions, and not that the hoped-for goals are necessarily focused on approaching or avoiding particular events or outcomes.

While hope has frequently been described as a positive emotion, researchers have recognized that it was certainly a less pleasurable state than happiness, surprise, pride, or interest, and was more on a par with challenge (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985, p. 826). As such, one might expect an aspect of the hope process to involve avoiding potential negative affect. This is an issue that will be clarified in the next section in this chapter.

In the meantime, a key contribution to the approach-avoidance debate was made by Roseman and Evdokas (2004) using experimental conditions that manipulated participants’ appraisals in order to identify the distinctive properties of different emotions. Three emotions, joy, relief, and hope, were experimentally induced by manipulating two types of appraisal. The first type of appraisal involved the participants’ motivational state as “appetitive,” i.e., increasing a pleasant experience, or “aversive,” i.e., reducing a painful experience. The second type of manipulated appraisal concerned a consideration of whether the outcome was “merely possible” or definitely achievable (p. 4). These researchers had hypothesized that hope would be elicited in uncertain conditions that involved both the attainment of a pleasant outcome and the avoidance of an unpleasant one, as earlier literature had suggested. This hypothesis, however, was only

partly supported. Although participants did report experiencing hope when faced with an uncertain circumstance that could potentially lead to a pleasant experience, this was not the case for uncertain but aversive outcomes. In that latter condition, the participants reported feeling sadness rather than hope. These experiments, of course, were conducted in laboratory settings, and it could be argued that under real-world conditions involving hoped-for goals that were much more personally important, different results might have occurred.

Nevertheless, these findings supported those found previously by Roseman (2001). In that study both hope and fear were identified as being elicited by appraisals of uncertainty concerning future events that had not yet occurred but were perceived as likely to do so. As Roseman (2001) has noted, the differences between the two constructs were that fear, as a negative emotion, was “motive-inconsistent” (i.e., related to an avoidance goal), while hope was perceived to be “motive-consistent” (i.e., related to an approach goal). The implication that hope is elicited when moving toward an uncertain and desirable outcome, or “approach goal” (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002, p. 218), rather than away from an uncertain and aversive one finds support among many earlier commentators. Thucydides, for example, regarded hope to be associated with positive outcomes, and Aquinas considered hope to be always in pursuit of something “good.”

We cannot, however, ignore the fact that hope and fear have had a long association, one noted as far back as Aristotle (Kennedy, 1991). According to Gravlee (2000), who wrote about Aristotle’s references to hope, “fear about the uncertain future remains only so long as hope concerning that future remains” (p. 471). That would appear to give credence to my earlier suggestion that the process of hoping would involve both approaching positive emotions associated with achieving a hoped-for goal, while avoiding negative emotions associated with failure. This is a subtle but important difference than focusing solely on whether the goal itself involves moving away from an unwanted outcome or moving toward a more desirable one. In that regard, I would question the veracity of investigating hope without taking into account its close association with fear.

Given the implication by Aquinas that hope is always in pursuit of “good,” let us now address the meaning of that suggestion in terms of both virtues and values.

### ***Hope, Virtues, and Values***

In an earlier section, I had indicated the ambiguous relationship that the ancient Greek culture had with hope, many of whose important commentators thought of it as a curse. The early Christian Church, however, took a very different view. The allegory of the seven heavenly virtues: faith, hope, charity, fortitude, justice, prudence, and temperance that battled against the seven deadly sins, helped to illuminate the philosophical concept of virtues in the minds of Christians during the Middle Ages. Of these seven virtues, faith, hope, and charity were afforded the special title of spiritual values. Additionally, the focus by St. Paul (c5 – c65) on love, hope, and faith as theological virtues was later explicated along with many other religious issues by the Italian philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274).

Before moving forward with this issue, a definition of terms is warranted here. McCloskey (2006), citing Alasdair MacIntyre, offered this definition: “A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving such goods” (p. 64). McCloskey (2006) then alluded to the volitional nature of virtues given that they concern things, “about which you can coherently say ‘you should practice X’ – courage, love, prudence, temperance, justice, faith, hope, for example” (p. 64). The virtues represent “ethical traditions” (McCloskey, 2006, p. 67), the “shoulds” or moral ways of being, at least according to Western thought. Although I am not suggesting that virtues and values are synonymous necessarily, the “oughtness” quality of values that Feather (1995) has articulated certainly suggests to me that for the purposes of this portion of my review the two be considered closely linked.

Hope is mentioned at length in the second volume of Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*, a three-part work that is often described as a beginners’ manual concerning matters of the Christian faith, albeit one that was heavily influenced by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle. To Aquinas, hope was a passion (emotion) and a virtue, the object

of which “is a future good, difficult but possible to obtain” (trans.1947, p. 1243), namely communion with God. Such a goal was considered difficult largely because of the imperfection of the person in relation to the hoped-for outcome. Whereas Aristotle regarded the confidence inherent in the hopeful to rely both on dispositional qualities and external resources, Aquinas’ theological focus placed Divine assistance or God’s help at the center of the attainment of “eternal happiness” (trans.1947, p. 243). Later, Aquinas emphasized the social relations inherent in hope when he stated that hope concerned two things, “the good which it intends to obtain, and the help by which that good is obtained” (trans.1947, p. 1244).

The association between hope and values, let alone virtue, appeared to have been largely ignored in contemporary psychological literature prior to Peterson and Seligman’s (2004) work on classifying character strengths. In that taxonomy, hope is categorized as a strength of transcendence, along with optimism, future-mindedness, and future orientation. The only other, albeit tangential, reference to hope as a virtue that I have found in the psychological literature concerned the previously-mentioned studies of Averill and his colleagues (Averill et al., 1990). Although these authors did not develop a model of hope, they posited four “rules of hope” based on findings from a series of questionnaire studies.

Three of these rules merely repeat what has been explicated elsewhere. The first is that hope is focused on outcomes that fall in a mid-range of possibilities, i.e., they are realistic enough to be imagined as able to occur while at the same time representing a degree of uncertainty. Averill et al. (1990) called this the “prudential rule” (p. 33). Additionally, hope was said to adhere to the “priority rule” (p. 33) in that it is concerned with matters considered to be of high personal importance. Hoping for “trivial events” according to these researchers is therefore “the exception and not the rule” (p. 33). The third or “action rule” (p. 34) touches upon the topic of control that will be addressed further in the next section on how we hope. As Averill et al. (1990) have identified, most of the hoped-for goals that could be partially if not completely controlled by the

individual involved taking some form of action. This included “working harder because of their hope,” or “thinking about the issue in a more creative way” (p. 34).

The fourth or “moralistic rule” (p. 33), concerning hopes for a social or personal good, is more in keeping with the virtuous notion of hope articulated by Aquinas. That Averill and his colleagues (Averill et al., 1990) should have found that “Hope is related to a person’s system of values in a way that wants, desires, and fantasies are not” (p 33) among U.S. participants is perhaps not surprising, however. Although this survey was conducted 11 years after Averill et al’s (1990) studies, the American Religious Identity Survey (ARIS) estimated the percentage of Christians in the U.S. population to be 76.5% (accessed from [http://www.adherents.com/rel\\_USA.html#religions](http://www.adherents.com/rel_USA.html#religions) on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2008). I would imagine that this figure has changed little since the previous decade. Whether conscious or not, the virtuous or values-based nature of hope espoused by Aquinas may have influenced the assumed majority of Christian respondents in the Averill studies.

Nevertheless, Averill et al. (1990) have little more to say about the relationship between hope and values other than this appears to be another differentiating factor between hope and optimism. In that regard, these authors stated that optimism is values-neutral while hope is bounded by those things that represent “the moral ideas of the individual and society” (p. 96). As I will illustrate in the next section of this chapter, Snyder’s hope theory focused on goals to the exclusion of potentially underlying values. It should also be noted that Snyder (2002) contradicted the “moralistic rule” of Averill et al. (1990) in stating that “there is no theoretical premise that prosocial, positive goals are being pursued. Indeed, high-hope goals may be antisocial” (p. 267).

I must express surprise that contemporary psychological models of hope have failed to explore at least a potential association between hope and values, giving preference instead to the focus on goals. According to Hayes, Strosahl, and Wilson (1999), values provide direction to one’s life whereas goals simply represent the destination. Additionally, research investigating the link between values and worries, a form of anxiety, suggests that values affect attention (interest), appraisals (perceptions),

plus goal importance and goal pursuit (Schwartz, Sagiv, & Boehnke, 2000), all of which are implicated in studies on hope. As such, it would appear salient to examine the issue of values beyond goals although possibly the differences are merely semantic. For example, Schwartz et al. (2000) defined values as “desirable, transsituational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people’s lives” (p. 315), and that may account for the more common use of the term *goals* rather than values, particularly in Snyder’s approach.

Alternatively, perhaps one of the reasons for overlooking values by cognitively-focused hope theorists, despite their obvious motivational value, is because according to Schwartz (2004) values and emotion are indubitably linked. As will become clear when we move to the next section that reviews how we hope, the role of feelings within Snyder’s hope model “is not well-articulated” (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002, p. 278).

### *Summary of Section One*

This section has reviewed the personal and situational antecedents of hope. In doing so I have introduced some commonly-accepted themes concerning who hopes, when hope is salient, and the nature of hoped-for goals. Hope commentators across the centuries have tended to agree that hope is a universal human experience that motivates us to take action and maintain focus on personally important goals whose future outcomes are not only uncertain but are perceived to be merely possible rather than probable. Without hope, all we would be left with would be fear, anxiety, and despair, the result of the “ills” that were described by the ancient Greeks as having been released by Pandora. As such, hoping appears to involve avoiding negative emotions while taking actions that increase the likelihood of experiencing (or “approaching”) positive emotions. The relationship between action and positive affect in the pursuit of hoped-for goals appears to be mediated by values, a topic to which I will return later.

Having identified these key antecedents of hope, the next section reviews how various hope researchers have illustrated the process by which human beings are hopeful.

## **The Process of Hope**

While there have been numerous conceptualizations of hope and almost as many different ways to measure it (see Table 1.1 on page 7), there are relatively few well-developed theoretical models that help to articulate the process of hope. In this section I focus on four models that researchers within the domains of psychology and nursing have postulated, in order to elicit answers to the question, “How do we hope?” These four illustrations of the hoping process were selected additionally to outline differences in methodologies that helped to inform my own approach. The first two perspectives are those of clinical psychologists, C.R. “Rick” Snyder and Anthony Scioli, and the final two illustrate the work of two groups of nurse-researchers, Karin Dufault and Benita Martocchio (1985), and Janice Penrod and Janice Morse (1997).

In order to compare and contrast these four different hope models, both within and between the domains of psychology and nursing, I have used the “guiding framework” or “four central attributes of hope” identified by Farran and her colleagues (Farran et al., 1995, p. 87). In my view, the comprehensive nature of their framework mapped well with my own broadly-viewed investigation of the hope process:

- 1) Experiential process: the ability to evaluate realistically uncertain and potentially fearful circumstances, together with the feelings that accompany them.
- 2) Relational process: social connectedness and access to community resources.
- 3) Engaging process: cognitions including goal setting and flexibility in pursuit of goals, temporality (whether goals are focused on the past, present, or future), a sense of personal control, and the use of “cognitive strategies” (p. 98) including optimism, positive self-talk, and the determination to succeed.
- 4) Spiritual or transcendent process: a sense of meaning, purpose, or faith that is implicated in hope.

I begin each part of this section by discussing one of the four theoretical frameworks in turn, and then summarize their perspectives in relation to the four processes of hope outlined above.



### *Snyder's Hope Theory*

C.R. “Rick” Snyder began his extensive work on hope after an earlier focus on reality negotiation (Snyder, 1989), and this continued until his untimely death in 2006. Arguably his has been the most influential and certainly most widely cited contemporary psychological theory of hope, spawning a large number of correlational studies using his Adult Hope Scale measure (AHS; Snyder et al., 1991). Such studies have associated hope with academic and sporting achievement (e.g., Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Snyder, Wiklund, & Cheavens, 1999), as well as mental and physical wellbeing (e.g., Snyder et al., 2000). Snyder based his theory on observations and interviews conducted over many decades in psychotherapeutic settings, together with the administration of his hope instrument to “over 10,000 adults in the U.S.” (Snyder et al., 1991, p. 109). It is largely thanks to Snyder that currently we are able to counter Menninger’s (1959) earlier observation concerning the paucity of articles on hope. Given the many articles and books that have subsequently been written on hope, many of which stem from Snyder and his colleagues, the shelves are no longer “bare” and the journals are no longer “silent” (Menninger, 1959, p. 481).

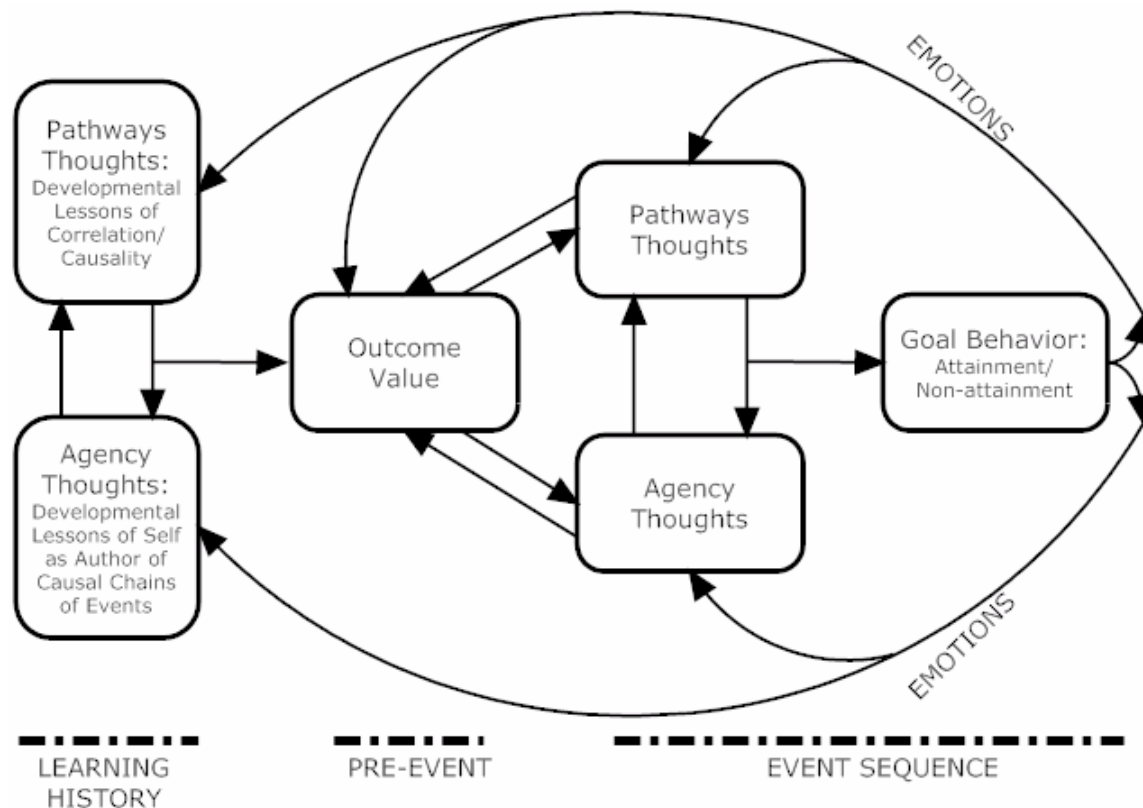
As articulated in the previous section, Snyder’s hope model is attractively parsimonious. When asked to give an example of how an individual hopes, he responded:

Well, a student may have a goal of completing a paper, and then will develop a timetable of plans for how she’s going to prepare that paper for a course. Then, she will engage in activities to try to motivate herself to actually stick with that plan. (retrieved from [http://www.eclg.com/community\\_snyder.php#7](http://www.eclg.com/community_snyder.php#7) on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008).

This example illustrated the two-component model of hope described elsewhere as “the sum of the mental willpower and waypower that you have for your goals” (Snyder, 1994, p. 5). *Willpower* represents personal agency or the confidence that by performing certain actions an individual will realize a personally important outcome, while *waypower* represents outcome expectancies. Scholars familiar with Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy model, as well as Carver and Scheier’s (1990; 2005) work on dispositional optimism, may recognize the similarities between self-efficacy and

willpower, and optimism and waypower. Snyder acknowledged these commonalities but said that his conceptualization of hope depended on the combination of both of these “cognitive sets” (Snyder et al., 1991, p. 573).

Figure 1 illustrates the hope process according to Snyder’s theory, and I will describe these various stages briefly, comparing his approach to the experiential, relational, spiritual/transcendent, and engaging processes of hope articulated by Farran et al. (1995).



**Figure 1. Snyder’s Hope Model**

***Learning History: How Hope Develops***

The first step in Snyder’s hope theory model outlined how agency and pathway thoughts developed in infancy, with pathways or an understanding of cause and effect relationships developing first. Later, as children begin to recognize themselves as agents or initiators of such causal chains, willpower thinking starts to develop. As emphasized

earlier, Snyder considered hope to be the reciprocal interaction of both agency and pathways thinking.

This emphasis on what Aspinwall and Leaf (2002) have described as “personal competencies” (p. 284) has given rise to criticism of Snyder’s hope model. While one might argue that the development of agency and pathways thoughts are implicitly related to early trust experiences with influential relationships, as articulated by Erikson (1963), Snyder has been charged with not adequately accounting for the social processes believed by others to be inherent in hope (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002). To be fair, Snyder (Snyder, Cheavens, & Sympson, 1997) did acknowledge elsewhere the part that influential role models appear to play in the development of hope in childhood, together with the exposure to “impediments” (p. 108) that, when successfully overcome, predispose children to establish a strong belief in their abilities to achieve their goals, as well as focus on success. He has also reported how higher hope individuals have a better social network than their lower hope peers (Snyder et al., 1997), and “that hope is a way of thinking that has a distinctly interpersonal flavor” (p. 114). Nevertheless, there is no inclusion within the model itself of these social forces, or any indication of how they directly or indirectly influence and sustain hope.

### ***Pre-Event***

In the next stage of Snyder’s cognitive-motivational theory of hope, the reciprocal iteration of both agency and pathways thinking “lead the protagonist to attach value to desired goal outcomes. Imagined outcomes involving hope must have reasonably high value to demand continued mental attention. Note also that this “outcome value” analysis occurs just prior to the event sequence” (Snyder, Feldman et al., 2000, p. 251). I interpreted this quote to imply that the individual’s thoughts concerning a desired goal are what initiated the hope process, rather than any specific context representing uncertainty, fear, and perceptions of adversity. This is a subtle but important difference between Snyder’s approach to hope and those explications outlined in previous sections of this chapter. A further difference between what Snyder is saying overall about hope and what I postulate later based on the findings from these data, concerns the issue of

values and valences. Although Snyder used the term “outcome value” (Snyder, Feldman et al., 2000, p. 251) in the above-mentioned quote, I considered this to refer to the *valence* of goals rather than any underlying values or “oughtness” (Feather, 1995, p. 1135). This distinction is further clarified and discussed in Chapter Four.

According to Wittgenstein (1978, 146e, §545), “But when one says, ‘I *hope* he’ll come’ doesn’t the feeling give the word “hope” its meaning?” Conceiving of hope as an emotion is, as discussed earlier, consistent with thousands of years of writings by early philosophers including Aristotle and Aquinas, together with contemporary approaches by other psychologists (e.g., Averill, et al., 1990; Scioli, Chamberlin, Samor, LaPointe, Campbell, & MacLeod, 1997), and nurse-researchers (see Farran et al., 1995 for a review). Nevertheless, Snyder posited that emotions are the “sequelae of cognitive appraisals of goal-related activities” (Snyder, 1994, p. 3). Further, Snyder (1995) emphasized that “in jump-starting the hope process emotions are not the primary focus” (p. 8), but are mere by-products of goal success. There are two important issues to discuss here, the first being the lack of an emotionally-charged context in which hope would be adaptively salient, and the second being the relegation of emotions, particularly negative emotions, to an almost negligible role within the Snyder model.

First, the issue of context. Overlooking this aspect of the hope process ignores extensive writings, particularly within the domains of philosophy and nursing, where emphasis has been placed on hope as salient in situations in which one is tested. For example, the individuals interviewed by Zournazi (2002) for her book *Hope: New philosophies for change* discussed hope in relation to “the new forms of fear and alienation in everyday life” that required a broader political vision and willingness to change. Certainly, hope has been considered an important topic for investigation by nurse-researchers given their day-to-day dealings with individuals facing a variety of acute and chronic health issues.

Snyder nevertheless marked the initiation of hoping at the point at which the individual determines the value (i.e., valence) of a specific goal, rather than regard it as

commencing prior to the establishment of goals, when circumstances presented that individual with a potentially fearful or despairing situation of perceived low control.

Second, it was not until Snyder elaborated his hope model (Snyder, 2002) to more clearly delineate certain obstacles to goal pursuit (e.g., “surprises,” and “stressors”) that his perspective on negative as well as positive emotions became clearer. In comparing Snyder’s hope model to the “experiential” process outlined by Farran et al., (1995), for example, we see no acknowledgement of the thoughts and feelings that might arise due to an individual being confronted with uncertain and thus potentially fear-inducing circumstances. Indeed, Snyder postulated that “In jumpstarting the hope process, emotions are not the primary focus” (Snyder, 1995, p. 360). Emotions are only discussed in Snyder’s model in relation to the negative feelings associated with failing to reach one’s goals, or the positive feelings related to successful goal pursuit. Certainly the issues of fear and anxiety associated with hope elsewhere appear to be overlooked. This issue was articulated at length by Aspinwall and Leaf (2002) in their criticism of the suggestion inherent in Snyder’s model that appraisals of goals are “uniformly favorable” (p. 279). This is a valid observation, given Snyder’s repeated descriptions of higher hope individuals as those whose past successes have helped them to develop a strong belief in their ability to achieve their goals and determination and commitment to meet those goals (i.e., agency thoughts), and the perceived capability to plan a variety of ways to achieve their goals (i.e., pathways thoughts).

Indeed, the overall sense that one is left with is that Snyder’s hope was extremely optimistic, given that both constructs concern generalized cognitions that are context-independent. In support of this point, Bryant and Cvenge (2004) used Snyder’s eight-item hope instrument (AHS) alongside the eight-item Life Orientation Test (LOT) that Scheier and Carver (1985) had developed to measure optimism and reported 64% shared variance between the sets of findings. This represents a correlation of .80 and is equivalent to test-retest reliability, suggesting that the AHS could be considered an alternate form of the LOT, or vice versa. If that is how Snyder has operationalized hope,

one must assume that the conceptualization upon which that instrument was based is similarly highly suggestive of optimism and not hope.

### ***Event Sequence***

What, then, is left to say about the Snyder hope model beyond what has been articulated thus far? When viewed in the context of Farran et al.'s (1995) "guiding framework" for the clinical assessment of hope (p. 86), it perhaps comes as no surprise that of the four "central attributes" (p. 87) identified by these authors, the rational thought process figures most strongly in Snyder's goal-focused model. Although the following issues are not obvious from simply looking at the model itself (see Figure 1 on page 36), the combination of pathways and agency thinking was postulated to encourage positive self-talk (Snyder, 1994, p. 6; Snyder, 2000, p. 250), and to involve well-defined, clearly articulated goals that may be broken down into smaller, achievable sub-goals, all of which are perceived to fall between probabilities of perceived impossibility (0%) and a sure-thing (100%) (Snyder, 2002).

*Approach and avoidance goals.* With respect to the nature of hoped-for goals, Snyder et al. (2000) articulated that both approach goals and avoidance goals are appropriate. As an example of the adaptive value of combining these strategies, these authors described a study conducted by Irving, Snyder, and Crowson (1998) in which female college students scoring either high or low on the Adult Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) were asked to imagine how they would cope with developing cancer at some future time. Not only did the high hope group demonstrate that they knew more about the topic after being given a "cancer facts test" (p. 254), even after controlling for level of academic achievement and personal history with cancer, but they "also reported a significantly higher likelihood of engaging in prevention activities" (p. 254). While avoidance goals are generally considered to represent a less beneficial coping strategy than approach goals, Snyder nevertheless proposed that both are "necessary and crucial for success of the human enterprise" (Snyder et al., 2000, p. 260), particularly those concerning health-related issues.

*Temporality.* Explications of temporality, particularly the future do not figure prominently in Snyder's hope model (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002), however. Perhaps the obvious connection between imagined goals and the future was thought to require no explanation, but the only reference I could find regarding the value of retrospective thinking in Snyder's writings concerned the learning that higher hope individuals took from past difficult or stressful experiences, "so as to be more effective in the future" (Snyder et al., 2000, p. 256). In that regard higher hope individuals differed from their lower hope counterparts by using prior knowledge about the obstacles they had met in pursuit of past goals, "as sources of useful information about both themselves and problems that they may meet in the future" (p. 256). This leads me to the issue of control that has been long connected with hope, particularly with respect to enhancing the ability to cope with challenge and uncertainty.

*Control.* In their article describing the newly-developed Adult Hope Scale (AHS), Snyder and his colleagues (Snyder et al., 1991) articulated that, "Higher hope people should want to exert personal control in their life" (p. 576). In support of that statement, these researchers had correlated scores from the AHS with two separate instruments that differentially measured aspects of control. They reported a moderate positive correlation (.54,  $p < .005$ ) between the Snyder's hope scale and the Burger-Cooper Life Experiences Survey (Burger & Cooper, 1979, cited in Snyder et al. 1991), that was designed to capture "a general desire for control, decisiveness, preparation, and prevention coping in anticipation of stressors" (p. 576). They found an even higher negative relationship (-.62,  $p < .005$ ) when correlating the AHS with the Problem Solving Inventory (PSI; Heppner & Petersen, 1982, cited in Snyder et al. 1991) whose items tapped an individual's perceived ability to solve problems, and the personal control involved in maintaining approach goals. Both of these findings suggested that there is considerable shared variance between hope and personal control that is perhaps not surprising given the emphasis Snyder had placed on personal agency and the perceived ability to plan alternative routes to attain one's goals, in his theoretical model.

*Realistic assessments.* Snyder considered higher hope individuals to demonstrate a “mental bias” that enabled them to maintain a largely positive focus during the pursuit of personally important goals. Indeed, an early definition of hope posited by Snyder was a “self-enhancing reality negotiation process whereby the person attempts to increase the linkage to positive acts” (Snyder, 1989, p 143). This appears related to Farran et al’s (1995) emphasis within their posited experiential process of hoping to the tendency of higher hope individuals to engage in “present-oriented reality surveillance” (p. 155).

The issue of what is realistically possible for any given individual would presumably derive from the sum of past experiences together with personality characteristics that predispose them to focus on what they believe they can achieve, versus what they perceive themselves as being unable to achieve. This is one of the issues that have divided commentators on hope for millennia, stretching back to the ancient Greek view that one should always be realistic about what one hopes for. In the contemporary psychological literature, Schneider (2001) acknowledged that the nature of reality is “fuzzy,” and defined being realistic in terms of taking actions that are “sensitive to experienced contingencies in the environment and are guided by a coherent value system. Being realistic also requires negotiating the uncertainty and lack of specificity that is a part of environment” (p. 252). I would certainly consider that definition to confirm the realistic nature of hope.

Further, in response to concerns regarding what Polivy and Herman (2000) have called *false hope syndrome*, Snyder and Rand (2003) argued that there is no such thing. These authors countered that in over 50 separate studies, higher levels of hope have been shown to be associated with positive outcomes in the areas of academics, sports, health, and psychotherapy. Therefore, stated Snyder and Rand (2003), it appeared not to be the case that the lofty goals of higher hope individuals were thwarted. On the contrary, they argued, the more hope a person had, the more realistic they were about the types of goal they considered to be important, how they modified their expectations of achieving that goal, and how flexible they were in relation to strategies employed in goal pursuit. As Snyder (2002) articulated, hopeful individuals “appear to calibrate their goal expectations



according to the relevant boundary conditions” (p. 264). Although related perhaps to the “fuzzy” boundaries articulated by Schneider (2001), according to Snyder (2002) these boundaries were believed to be wider for people with higher hope.

Snyder’s hope was certainly congruent with a realistic bent given his emphasis on the higher hope’s propensity to focus on previous successes when faced with new difficulties. In that regard, Snyder earmarked perhaps the biggest difference between hope and optimism as it has been defined in terms of an explanatory style by Seligman (1990), i.e., concerning attributions that are external (negative outcomes are due to external factors, not inherent flaws within the individual), variable (failure or problems are conceived as being temporary not permanent), and specific (the individual does not generalize a specific case of failure to every aspect of their lives). Instead of the reported tendency of optimists to use “mental excuses” that help to “lessen the impact of current and potential failures” (Snyder, 1994, p. 16), thereby implying a focus on negative outcomes, Snyder stressed that hopeful individuals were largely concerned only with success.

How they do that remains unclear from his model, however, prompting Aspinwall and Leaf (2002) to ask how an individual’s hope is maintained over time, and in particular how their agency and pathways thinking changes when faced with insurmountable problems. Elsewhere, Snyder (2002) reported that when investigating the “stretch goals” (p. 824) preferred by higher hope individuals, he found that these extraordinary individuals appeared to solve problems that the researcher himself had once considered insurmountable. I will return to this topic in the final section of this chapter when I address how hope theorists, including the various researchers whose models are being explicated here, articulated the outcomes or consequences associated with hope.

### ***Summarizing Snyder’s Hope***

When compared against the four “central attributes” or processes of hope articulated by Farran et al. (1995) it became obvious that Snyder’s approach tended most strongly to capture the “rational thought process” that involved the formulation, pursuit, and strategies concerned with goal attainment. Snyder addressed the thoughts, and to a

lesser extent the feelings associated with the reality orientation of hopeful individuals, but set these outside of any particular context. Hence, it could be argued that he failed to address many of the factors that Farran et al. (1995) considered relevant to hope in terms of their “experiential process”. Further, the relational nature of hope in Snyder’s model was addressed mainly at the developmental level. Beyond describing how infants and toddlers develop the two cognitive components in the hope model in his other writings, or making general statements such as “Hope necessitates a mentor” (Snyder, Feldman, et al., 2000, p. 264), and “high-hopers said that they had adult caregivers who had spent large amounts of time in mentoring them in their childhoods” (Snyder, 2005, p 75), Snyder seems to have failed to explicate the social connectedness inherent in hope that has been addressed more fully by other hope commentators.

Finally, another area that Snyder had largely ignored in his writings until relatively recently involved hope’s association with a spiritual or transcendent outlook. In a later article Feldman and Snyder (2005) investigated the relationship between hope and meaning in life. Adhering strongly to their goal-focused perspective on hoping, Feldman and Snyder (2005) concluded that goals were “the bricks of meaning” (p. 418), and meaning, in turn, was the way in which individuals maintained sufficient control in their lives in order to achieve their goals. No mention was made of transcendent or spiritual qualities, in contrast to the strong focus on this aspect of hope that was made in the theoretical framework posited by the next clinical psychologist to be featured, Anthony Scioli.

### ***Scioli’s Hope Foundation System***

In contrast to Snyder’s cognitive perspective, Scioli viewed hope as both socially-constructed and an emotion (Scioli , 2007). As Scioli has stated on his website, his goal had been “to develop a general theory of hope that will combine the best insights of scientists and philosophers as well as poets and writers, and weave them into one large interdisciplinary tapestry” (retrieved from <http://www.gainhope.com/hope/default.cfm> on February 2nd, 2008). He posited a five-level system of hope (see Table 2.1 on page 46), in his as-yet unpublished book, *Hope in the Age of Anxiety: A guide for understanding,*

*building, and strengthening the virtue of hope*, co-authored with Dr. Henry Biller. I am not aware of any studies conducted by Scioli to date that have tested the deductively-derived, multi-level model against the lived experience of hope within specific populations. Nevertheless, his approach represents an important contribution to understanding hope within an integrative theoretical framework. His is also a much-needed voice to contrast the more narrowly-defined hope articulated by Snyder. Indeed, Scioli has developed an alternative hope instrument based on this rich conceptualization that comprised both a series of state scales to capture the respondent's current goal-related thoughts, feelings, social, and spiritual reality (e.g., "I feel loved by someone," "I feel part of a group," and "I'm making progress toward important goals"), and an assessment of trait hope addressing such consistent beliefs as "My life has meaning," "I look forward to the future," and "My spiritual beliefs provide me with a feeling of safety" (retrieved from [http://www.gainhope.com/hope/test\\_form2.cfm?ID=3641](http://www.gainhope.com/hope/test_form2.cfm?ID=3641) on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008).

Scioli's interdisciplinary approach is particularly valuable in bringing together postulations about hope that have, hitherto, largely remained separate. In helping answer the question, "How do we hope?" he posited a hope theory that focused largely on how hope is developed from three motivational forces: attachment, mastery, and survival (Scioli et al., 1997; Scioli & Biller, n.d.). As these authors pointed out, each of these three themes had been emphasized variously by other hope theorists and researchers. Generally speaking, psychologists have tended to focus on goal pursuit, planning, and the empowerment aspects of hope (e.g., Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder 1994, 2002; Stotland, 1969), thereby emphasizing the mastery motive. Within the medical profession, the emphasis had been largely on hope and coping, related to the survival motive (e.g., Menninger, 1959), while it had been mostly left to philosophers to articulate the relational or attachment motive underpinning hope (e.g., Godfrey, 1987; Lynch, 1965). Evidence suggests that these emphases are not as clear-cut as Scioli would have us believe, given that Lazarus (a psychologist) has written extensively about hope and coping (Lazarus, 1999), and that many nurses including those researchers whose hope

models will be articulated later in this section, have done much to articulate the trust, openness, and interpersonal connections associated with Scioli’s attachment motive (see Farran et al., 1995 for a review). That aside, it is rare to find a psychologist like Scioli who addresses all of these essential elements in one cohesive whole.

Table 2.1 outlines Scioli’s five levels of hope together with their underlying motives and associated characteristics. As before, I will discuss each facet of this hope framework and then summarize how they conform to the four processes identified by Farran and her colleagues (Farran et al. 1995), loosely concerning the cognitive, emotive, relational, and spiritual aspects of hope.

**Table 2.1 Hope Foundation System**

<b>5<sup>th</sup> Level: <i>Beliefs &amp; Behaviors</i></b>			
Daily hope beliefs	I'm empowered	The universe is good	I will be saved
Daily hope feelings	I feel supported	I feel connected	I feel safe
Daily hope actions	I build alliances	I remain open	I stay centered
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Level: <i>The Faith System</i></b>			
Elements of Faith	Centers of Value		
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Level: <i>The Hopeful Core</i></b>			
Mastery-oriented traits	Goal-Oriented Trust Mediated Control Higher Aims		
Attachment-oriented traits		Relationship-Trust Self-Other Bonds Openness	
Survival-oriented traits		Survival-Oriented Trust & Care Recruitment Terror Management & Liberation Beliefs Spiritual Integrity Symbolic Immortality	
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Level: <i>Nature &amp; Nurture</i></b>			
Psychological endowments	Talent, goal-directedness	Basic trust & basic openness	Coping skills & defense mechanisms
Social & cultural endowments	Support & guidance	Care and love	Cultural terror management lessons
Spiritual endowments	Purpose	Presence	Salvation promises
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Level: <i>Blueprints (Motives)</i></b>			
Biological “roots and wings”	Mastery motive	Attachment motive	Survival motive

### ***Level 1 – Biological Motives***

In their extensive review of hope in relation to “every major religious or spiritual belief system,” Scioli and Biller (n.d., p. 150) provided evidence for the long-held assertion that hope is a universal experience. As a means of explaining why hope would find expression across space and time, these authors posited that the development of hope depended on three biological motives, namely mastery, attachment, and survival. In contrast to Judaism, whose hope references within the Torah were primarily survival-based and attachment-based, and the Christian New Testament where the emphasis was similar but also encompassed mastery-based hope references, Scioli and Biller (n.d.) identified scientific psychology as more strongly emphasizing only mastery-based references to hope. In order for the experience of hope to develop fully in a human being, however, Scioli and Biller (n.d.) argued that all three of these motives are required.

Within the burgeoning field of positive psychology, Scioli (2007) found that these three motives were implicated in a large number of Quality of Life (QOL) indicators, such as “perseverance, engagement, purpose, love, and positive relations” (p. 142), thereby helping to explain hope’s widespread, positive impact on psychological, physiological, and social well-being. By addressing the process of hope at these basic, biologically-derived levels, Scioli (2007) responded to the issue raised by Peterson and Seligman (2004), mentioned earlier, who called hope and optimism “Velcro constructs” because “everything seems to stick to them for reasons that are not always apparent” (p. 577). If, as posited by Scioli (2007), hope is intimately associated with the motives for mastery, attachment, and survival, and by virtue of those associations it is indirectly linked to a wide variety of other QOL variables, then it is perhaps not surprising that hope is implicated in so many other positive traits.

When Park, Peterson, and Seligman (2004) tested the hypothesis posited in a complementary article by Snyder (2004) that hope would be the greatest predictor of life satisfaction, they found that hope was indeed one of the strongest predictors of well-being, but no more so than several other “virtues.” As an aside, a study by Scioli that investigated the extent to which hope or socioeconomic status predicted life satisfaction

using his Comprehensive Hope Scales (CHS; Scioli, 2004), found that “trait hope contributed 97% of the explained variance in life satisfaction” (Scioli, 2007, p. 145).

Scioli (2007) has suggested that the reason why hope did not occupy the position of “chief virtue” (Park et al., 2004, p. 629) as Snyder had claimed, was because this construct was too narrowly defined by Snyder in terms of expectancy of goal attainment. As Scioli (2007) has articulated, “while goal expectations are an important part of the hope construct, they are by no means the ‘whole story’” (p. 142).

### ***Level 2 – Nature and Nurture***

In order for an individual’s capacity to hope to become fully developed, Scioli (2007) posited that the above-mentioned three biological motives must be nurtured by certain psychological traits and socially-derived “endowments” (p. 138). These include social connectedness at levels ranging from the immediate family to the wider cultural context, echoing Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) *ecological systems* theory. In accordance with Erikson’s psychosocial theory of human development (1963), Scioli acknowledged the important role that early “open and trusting” (p. 139) relationships with caregivers play in the development of hope in the early stages of life. According to Scioli and Biller (n.d.)

Like any structure, the strength of the upper levels depends on the firmness of the lower levels. For example, an adequate attachment system (level 1) facilitates basic trust (level 2) which spawns greater differentiated trust (level 3), leading to stronger faith development (level 3), which translates into adaptive daily hope resources (level 4).

At this second level we can begin to see how the process of hoping relies not only on a general trust in oneself, one’s future, and the world at large, but the acquisition of skills including goal pursuit, approach coping, and avoidance coping. The inclusion of “terror management” at this level acknowledged numerous arguments by philosophers including Aristotle (384-322 BCE) and Spinoza (1632-1677), echoed later by Lazarus (1999), that hope and fear are irrevocably linked.

### ***Level 3 – Hopeful Traits***

At this third level, Scioli (2007) has articulated what he recognized to be the “three clusters of personality traits” (p. 139), concerning the “attached self,” (i.e., attachment orientation), “the empowered self,” (i.e., mastery orientation), and “the resilient self” (or survival orientation) that are manifested during the process of hoping. As shown in Table 2.1, the mastery orientated elements of “goal-related trust,” and “higher aims” are tangentially linked to Snyder’s cognitive-motivational model of hope. What Scioli (2007) has included that has remained less well articulated by Snyder, however, was the “mediated control” that would facilitate the accomplishment of shared goals. Scioli cited Lynch (1965), regarding the distinction between the more socially and spiritually focused hope and the “more ego-centered optimism” (p. 140). The social nature of hope is further explicated in Scioli’s (2007) theoretical framework through the relation-focused cluster of hope traits that he posited to be associated with the attachment motive.

The third survival-focused cluster of hope traits addressed by Scioli (2007), further reinforced the spiritual nature of hope that has remained under-explored in Snyder’s goal-oriented approach. It is in this regard that Scioli (2007) more closely conformed to the spirit of hope articulated by philosophers down the ages.

### ***Level 4 – The Faith System***

Scioli (2007) described faith as “the bedrock of trait hope” (p. 141), echoing the passage in Hebrews 11.1 that stated “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (New American Standard Bible, 1995, retrieved from <http://bible.cc/hebrews/11-1.htm> on February 3rd, 2008). While Scioli and Biller (n.d.) acknowledged that faith and hope are frequently used synonymously, they also recognized that for many individuals the expression of hope lay outside a formalized religious system such as Christianity, being more akin to the “humanistic spirituality” of Maslow and Dewey (p. 160).

### ***Level 5 – Beliefs and Behaviors***

It is at this fifth level that Scioli's (2007) hope framework outlined the everyday manifestations of hope in terms of an individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. According to this approach, we can only fully understand *how* an individual hopes by appreciating the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and spiritual systems that supported those expressions over time. The process of hope in this model thus relies on beliefs that are grounded in both a trust in the self and others, in feelings that emanate from external support and a sense of social connectedness, the ability to tap into those social resources, the use of positive self-talk to maintain calm during high stress encounters, and goal-focused actions involving open-mindedness and flexibility.

### ***Strengths and Weaknesses***

In contrast to Snyder's (1994, 2002) model that strongly emphasized "personal competencies" (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002), Scioli's (2007) model of hope does more to address the obvious social nature of hope, thereby adhering to Farran et al.'s (1995) relational process. While Snyder focused largely on the "cognitive building blocks of hope in the infant-toddler stage" (Snyder et al., 1997, p. 108), that resulted in the acquisition of agency- and pathways-thinking, Scioli's model moved beyond the motive for mastery to address the attachment/trust and coping/survival motives explicated elsewhere (Erikson, 1963; Lazarus, 1999).

Nevertheless, although Scioli's model strongly emphasized the relational and spiritual processes identified by Farran et al. (1995), in addition to the more goal-related "rational thought" process that is central to Snyder's model, I was left wondering about additional themes that appear pertinent to hope but are not well-articulated in this approach. These include the context in which hope would be salient and thus experienced in contrast to optimism, wishing, or wanting, the issue of reality surveillance and negotiation explicated elsewhere, and how an individual might use past, present, and future thoughts to formulate goals and navigate obstacles.

In fairness, however, it is obvious that Scioli and Biller's (n.d.) explication of the process of hoping occurs at a higher (or deeper) level of analysis than the concern with



everyday goal pursuits addressed in Snyder's hope model. As such, in comparing the two psychological approaches of Snyder and Scioli, I considered them to represent two extremes. While Snyder's model is arguably overly cognitive-, agency-, and goal-focused and excluded many aspects of hope that other commentators would consider essential to an authentic explication of this complex construct, Scioli's higher level approach left me wondering just how individuals drew upon all the various "endowments" (Scioli & Biller, n.d., p. 39) in everyday life.

Whereas both of these theoretical frameworks of hope were primarily deductive, nurse-researchers involved in a more practically-applied understanding of hope have tended to develop their models inductively. Specifically, as Farran et al. (1995) have articulated, the use of qualitative methodologies, specifically semi-structured interviews, has "contributed a great deal of depth and breadth to our understanding of hope" (p. 153). In the next two portions of this chapter I present two such qualitative approaches.

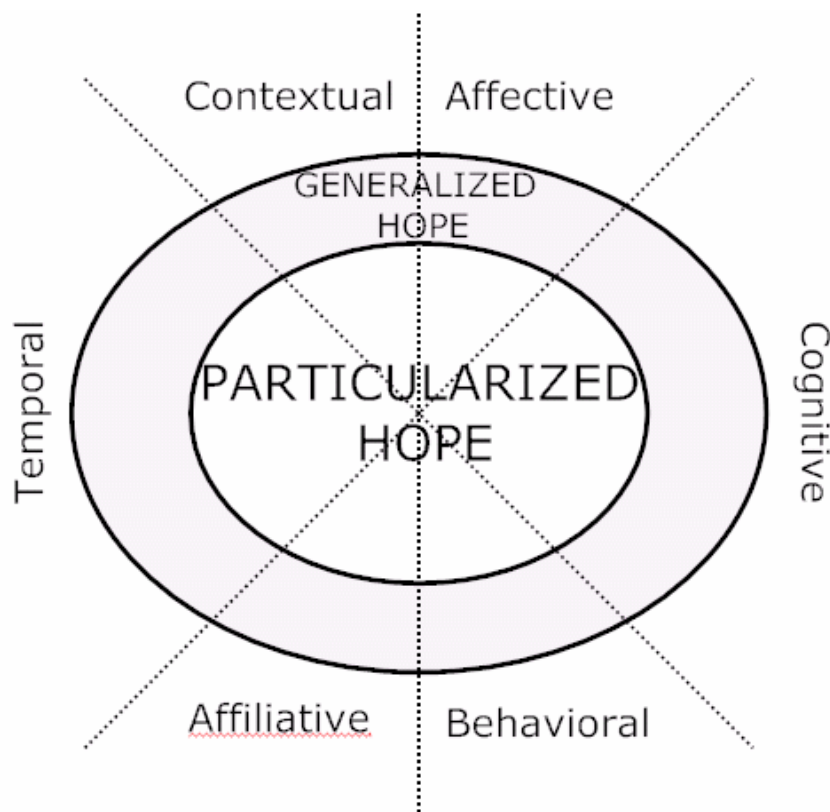
#### *Dufault and Martocchio's Spheres and Dimensions of Hope*

Dufault and Martocchio combined the learning from the studies they had conducted for their individual doctoral dissertations to develop a highly-influential model of hope that inspired later hope researchers within the nursing domain (e.g., Herth, 1991, 1992). While Dufault's (1981) dissertation focused specifically on the hope experienced by elderly cancer patients, Martocchio's (1975) research investigated hope more tangentially, being focused on how dying individuals negotiated their social worlds.

The qualitative investigation of hope by nurse-researchers has had a relatively long history, at least by contemporary standards. An early study by Wright and Schontz (1968, cited in Farran et al., 1995) used interview techniques with both children and adults and found that both the cognitive task of "reality surveillance" and affective experiences including worry, mourning, and encouragement were important "structures" of hope (Farran et al., 1995). A decade later, Stanley (1978, cited in Farran et al., 1995) conducted a phenomenological study with college students, using open-ended questions to prompt descriptions of the "lived experience of hope" (p. 156). From those findings, Stanley proposed hope to be "a confident expectation of a significant future outcome

accompanied by a quality of transcendence and interpersonal relatedness in which action to affect the outcome is initiated” (Farran et al., 1995, p. 156). The elements of hope identified by Stanley conformed to what commentators on hope throughout the ages have postulated, in that hope involved the confident expectation of a future outcome that is actively pursued, comprised both positive and negative emotions, was socially constituted and spiritually supported.

Nevertheless, as Dufault and Martocchio (1985) have articulated, “Although most nurses agree that hope is important for healthful living, the literature is sparse about hope or the processes of hope as concepts useful in guiding nursing action” (p. 379). In that regard these authors were interested in developing a model of hope that not only would enable nurses to recognize more easily “the observable manifestations of hope” (p. 379) within a clinical population, but would contribute toward the development of effective, practical interventions that would enable, foster, and sustain hope in their patients. The data contributed by Dufault were collected over a two-year period among 35 purposively-selected cancer patients aged 65 years or more. The findings concerning the nature of hope from this sample were confirmed against a younger group (14 years and over) of patients with different diagnoses through the “reanalysis” of data collected over a separate two-year period by Martocchio (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985, p. 379). Both researchers used participant observation in a variety of institutional and home environments. From these data, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) articulated that hope was a “multidimensional and process-oriented” construct that was composed of “two spheres having six common dimensions” (p. 380), as illustrated in Figure 2.



**Figure 2. Dufault and Martocchio’s Spheres and Dimensions of Hope**

***Hope’s Two Spheres***

Dufault and Martocchio (1985) found that hope variously accomplished two functions that differed principally according to the concrete or abstract nature of the hoped-for outcome. *Generalized hope* was thus described as “a sense of some future beneficial but indeterminate developments” (p. 380) and is most redolent of hope in the form of a noun whereby an individual might refer to “having nothing left but hope” or “hoping against hope,” both common expressions of hope albeit in the most dire and uncontrollable circumstances. Contrasted with that, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) also found evidence of what they called *particularized hope* that concerned specific hope objects. Certainly, these authors acknowledged that such hope objects could vary in their level of abstractedness, from hoping for a 10% pay raise, to hoping that an individual could sit through a funeral service without breaking down. What differentiated these two spheres of hope was described by Dufault and Martocchio (1985) thus: “Generalized hope is like an intangible umbrella that protects hoping persons by casting a positive

glow on life. It extends beyond some of the limitations of time and matter to which the particularized sphere of hope is tied” (p. 380).

The view that there is no single, general form of hope that is applicable to all future desired outcomes had been articulated within the philosophical literature on hope. For example, in his review of the postulations on hope by philosophers Ernst Bloch (1885-1997), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), and Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973), Godfrey (1987) articulated the differences between *ultimate* or *aimed hope* whose “simple objectives are one’s own benefit, another’s benefit, or shared life” (p. 152), and *fundamental* or *absolute hope* whose role was to enable an individual, whose aimed hope had been thwarted, to “hold off from despair” and “believe that something (perhaps as yet unknown) is worthwhile and possible” (p. 154). Thus, aimed or ultimate hope would appear to adhere to Dufault and Martocchio’s (1985) definition of particularized hope, while fundamental or absolute hope would align with their generalized hope. With respect to the contexts in which each might be most salient, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) reported that in circumstances where the perceived threat of failing to achieve previously specified goals became so great, or the hoped-for outcome became increasingly unlikely because of “rapidly changing conditions” (p. 381), then a belief that “there is always hope” helped the individual to ward off despair.

This raises an interesting point with respect to the kind of participants one might need to sample for a study on hope. It is perhaps not surprising that “fundamental” or “generalized” hope should have gained prominence within the work of philosophers and medical professionals, whose focus in exploring hope extends beyond the typical college undergraduates who are recruited for psychological studies. It is this form of hope that appears to enable individuals to transcend the disappointment or despair that they might otherwise experience when facing the most exacting of circumstances, such as life-threatening illness (Farran et al., 1990; Herth, 1989; Hinds, 2004; Miller & Powers, 1988). As articulated by Scioli and his colleagues (Scioli et al., 1997), fundamental hope was a trait that facilitated successful adaptation to serious life events. Whereas this type of hope is object-less, as Averill et al. (1990, p. 105) have articulated, “With hope, we

can begin to realize the possibilities inherent both in the situation and *in ourselves*" (my italics). As such I would suggest that fundamental hope signifies the shifting of focus from something that can be tangibly achieved to a transformation of the self. This conforms to the spiritual shift that appeared to occur for Frankl's (1959) fellow prisoners in the Nazi war camps when they focused their thoughts away from the concrete goal or "aimed hope" of escaping, to a more abstract or "fundamental hope" that concerned maintaining their sense of humanity despite their dire circumstances. According to Frankl (1959), it was the prisoners with fundamental hopes who managed to survive while others lost the will to live. Under these kinds of extreme circumstances, it is arguably more realistic and adaptive to focus one's thoughts away from an external goal over which one has little or no control, and toward coping with one's own thoughts and emotions (Morse & Doberneck, 1997). This is an element of hope, however, that would not be captured by the more concrete goal-oriented model of Snyder.

In further differentiating these spheres of hope, thus providing further clues not only as to the specific contexts in which each might be relevant but the behaviors that might accompany them, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) articulated that particularized hopes helped an individual clearly to identify, prioritize, and confirm personally important goals.

Particular hopes encourage investment in and commitment to something specific that extends beyond the present moment and provides an object toward which a hoping person's own energies and those of others can be directed. Hope in this sphere provides an incentive for constructive coping with obstacles and for devising alternative means to realize the object of hope (p. 381).

In that regard, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) have encompassed within particularized hope, Snyder's (1994, 2002) later cognitive model of hope. Certainly there are considerable similarities concerning the energetic determination and commitment to pursue goals (agency thinking), along with the means by which an individual might overcome obstacles to goal attainment (pathways thinking). Beyond that, however, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) have acknowledged several other important facets of

hope discussed in other literatures and models, including its social nature, the values that are inherent in personally important goals, and “meaning in life” (p. 381).

### ***Hope’s Dimensions***

In addition to identifying these two “spheres of hope,” Dufault and Martocchio (1985) identified six “dimensions of hope:” affective, cognitive, behavioral, affiliative, temporal, and contextual, each of which was said to contribute to an individual’s unique experience of hope.

*Affective dimension.* It could be argued that psychologists will never be able to decide conclusively the cause and effect relationship between cognitions and emotions. Within the appraisal literature, theorists such as Roseman (e.g., Roseman and Evdokas, 2004) have attempted to demonstrate the long-held belief (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988; Weiner, 1986) that cognitions cause individuals to experience emotions. Coming from a cognitive focus, as Snyder (1994, 2002) did, it is thus not surprising that emotions or affect have played a secondary role in psychological models of hope. This is certainly not the case within the philosophical literature where hope has consistently been written about in terms of a passion or emotion by Aristotle, Aquinas, Hume, Spinoza, and others. Similarly, the pragmatically-focused nurse-researchers who have studied hope across a variety of clinical populations have acknowledged the strong emotional component of hope.

In that regard, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) identified many emotional expressions related to their patients’ discussions concerning hope. Regarding the confidence inherent in hope, they reported many references to positive emotions that adhered to a number of metaphorical descriptions recorded by Averill et al. (1990), such as the uplifting, energizing, “vital” nature of hope. However, given hope’s salience in uncertain circumstances, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) also noted the considerable number of negative emotions that were referenced when discussing hope, including feeling anxious, nervous, sad, fearful, angry, and despondent. Of particular note is their recognition that both positive and negative emotions could be experienced simultaneously during the hope process. This was the case with one elderly woman with

lung cancer who, in talking about her hope for a cure, spoke of feeling good about the possibility that her prayers might be answered, while being unable to avoid her upset and worry that the medical staff did not know how to make her better. In everyday life it is not difficult to acknowledge that many of the contexts in which hope is salient involve complex, rapidly-changing circumstances that span a spectrum of probabilities from near-success to near-failure. It is under those conditions that the process of hoping can run the gamut from happiness to despair. As Dufault and Martocchio (1985) have articulated,

There is no one feeling or group of feelings that characterizes the hoping process. All feelings and emotional responses described in the affective dimension may be experienced within hoping processes, though there are differences as to which are dominant or present at a particular time. Individuals' confidence and uncertainty about the outcomes of hope objects fluctuates, as does their feelings about their attraction to and the personal significance of hope objects. (p. 384).

*Cognitive dimension.* This dimension embodied a variety of thought processes including imagining a future outcome, perceiving whether it could be realistically attained, and maintaining that realistic stance as the individual continued to assess and interpret ongoing experiences. Dufault and Martocchio (1985) defined hope's reality-based focus in terms of the individual's perceptions of the internal and external resources that were available to them. In that regard, these authors distinguished hope from wishing, given that the latter "is not perceived as within the realm of possibility in the present or future" (p. 385). This perspective is contrary to that of Lynch (1965), however, who posited that "wishing is born out of and lives on hope" (p. 142), going so far as to posit that "when we cannot wish we cannot hope" (p. 129). Nevertheless, this issue would take us into the realm of semantics given Lynch's (1965) definition of wishing that to many, may simply describe the imaginative quality of hope.

*Behavioral dimension.* Within this dimension, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) differentiated between actions that were directly aimed at attaining a hoped-for outcome and those actions that are "a consequence of hope" and thus may not contribute directly to a specific goal. Outcome-focused actions embraced "four realms" that included 1) mental activities such as organizing, planning, decision-making, and patiently "waiting

for favorable circumstances” (p. 385); 2) physical activities related to goal attainment; 3) social actions such as help-seeking, and involving others in the pursuit of specific goals; and 4) religious actions such as praying, meditating, taking part in spiritual rituals, and becoming affiliated with groups that bring the hoping individual closer to whatever higher power they recognize.

Descriptions of those actions falling within the sub-category of “consequences of hope” included behaviors that were unrelated to any particular goal but otherwise helped to direct the energy and confidence that individuals reported when experiencing higher levels of hope.

*Affiliative dimension.* Here, we find reference to Scioli and Biller’s (n.d.) motive of attachment as well as the attendant “spiritual endowments” associated with forming a relationship with God or higher power. In this regard, the patients who expressed their hopes to Dufault and Martocchio (1985) during these studies described their relationships both in terms of objects of hope, such as hoping to improve relations with family members or concern about who would look after their pets when they died, as well as help-seeking. References were also made as to the extent to which other people were able to engender, promote, and sustain hope when the individual’s own hope resources seemed to be almost depleted. Certainly, there was a strong theme of social and spiritual connectedness imbued within this dimension as individuals expressed a sense of belonging, mutual dependence, and shared hopes.

*Temporal dimension.* Although hope is frequently spoken of as a future-oriented construct, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) identified various ways in which all three temporal spaces (past, present, and future) contributed to the process of hope.

(1) *Future.* Dufault and Martocchio (1985) identified a temporal strategy that individuals used to buffer themselves against disappointment, namely articulating hopes with a non-specific future outcome. For example, they described how one man hoped that he would “one day” be able to walk by himself to the bathroom. In that regard,

keeping hopes non-time-specific serves as a protective device; individuals are protected from disappointment when a hope is not realized within a specific time



frame. Non-time-specific hopes also expand the possible, extend opportunities for positively affecting the hope, and delay the need for further reality surveillance. (p. 387).

(2) *Past*. This temporal dimension was found to provide a variety of influences toward future goals. These included memories of past outcomes that might be hoped for again, avoided in the future, or modified in some way. Even those hopes that remained unmet could, to the hopeful individual provide inspiration by reminding them of how they coped and transcended their loss and disappointment, thereby promoting a sense of strength and courage.

(3) *Present*. According to Dufault and Martocchio (1985) “hope extends the present into the future,” not least by enabling a person to imagine ways in which the future will be different from the present. Consistent with hope’s relationship to both approach and avoidance goals, these authors articulated how when related to the present, future hopes might be targeted at eliminating a current deficit or negative, or enhancing a present good.

*Contextual dimension*. In contrast to both Snyder and Scioli, for whom the context in which hope is salient was largely overlooked, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) identified “actual or potential loss” as providing the backdrop for the hopes of the patients in their studies. Such losses varied from the most dramatic, such as loss of life or the ability to take part in a wide range of physical and mental activities, to those involving an inability to meet certain familial, social or cultural expectations, or even the loss of important material possessions.

Certainly, given the extreme negative health conditions under which the participants in Dufault and Martocchio’s (1985) studies were living it is not hard to see why these researchers would articulate that hope was intimately linked with crisis and loss. On a more positive note, however, they also identified many ways in which hope was generated through the sharing of thoughts, feelings, and future goals with others. Beyond simply being involved with everyday goal-setting and pursuit, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) articulated how hope was inspired during occasions when an

individual was promoted to review their values, reflect on the meaning or purpose of their life, even to the point where they were anticipating their own death.

### ***Summary of Dufault and Martocchio***

This comprehensive explication of how people hope addressed most of the processes and sub-processes later articulated by Farran and her colleagues (Farran et al., 1997). Dufault and Martocchio's (1985) affective, cognitive, and contextual dimensions helped to illustrate the complex ways in which individuals facing uncertain and fearful circumstances dealt with a plethora of positive and negative thoughts and feelings (experiential process). They described the various ways in which social relationships influenced and were influenced by an individual's hopes (relational process). They acknowledged how these relationships extended beyond other human beings or animals to encompass an individual's spiritual affinities (spiritual/transcendent process), as well as addressing the nature of hoped-for outcomes, the various actions that individuals engaged in when pursuing specific goals, and the role of generalized hope in circumstances where all there was left to do was hope (rational thought process).

Other factors implicated in hoping, including temporality, reality surveillance, and the complex interplay of negative and positive emotions were further clarified by real-life examples of individuals for whom hoping was a crucial life motive, not simply a topic that college students were temporarily asked to consider on self-report instruments in order to gain course credit. Given the extreme nature of the circumstances in which Dufault and Martocchio's participants were studied, however, I was left wondering how the six dimensions of hope might apply to individuals who were not facing relatively short futures filled with physical pain and impending death.

Although the data sources from which the next set of nurse-researchers, Penrod and Morse, developed their Hope Assessment Guide included individuals awaiting heart transplants and those with spinal cord injuries, the inclusion of breast cancer survivors and breast-feeding mothers was closer to the "normal" albeit highly challenged sample within my own study.

### *Penrod and Morse's Hope Assessment Guide*

Like Dufault and Martocchio, nurse-researchers Penrod and Morse were concerned with finding practical ways in which nurses might assess a patient's level of hope and hence design hope-enhancing interventions on a case-by-case basis. Their Hope Assessment Guide was an extension of earlier work conducted by Morse and Doberneck (1995), in which these researchers analyzed a documentary about a family lost in blizzard conditions in the Rocky Mountains in order to identify key "conceptual components" (p. 279) related to the process of hoping. The researchers then identified four clinical situations in which hope was considered to be salient but potentially experienced differently, these being: a) patients (all male) waiting for heart transplants; b) patients (also all male) suffering from spinal cord injuries; c) breast cancer survivors (all female); and d) breast-feeding mothers. The hopes that were identified among each of these four groups ranged from hoping to live independent and full lives, or hoping to at least experience some personally important event associated with themselves or members of their family, to bringing up a happy, healthy baby and eventually returning to work. These researchers then tested the seven deductively-derived components of hope against the interview data gathered from these four clinical groups (Morse & Doberneck, 1995). Penrod and Morse (1997) combined two of these components into one, resulting in the six stages of hope shown in Table 2.2.

Penrod and Morse (1997) applied Morse and Doberneck's (1995) model against an autobiographical description of a breast cancer survivor's experiences from the time that she was diagnosed with the disease, through each stage of her treatment. Table 2.2 outlines the six stages of hope related to that personal experience, along with some of the "behavioral signs" that Penrod and Morse (1997) identified as being useful to nurses in identifying where in the process of hoping an individual might be at any given time.

**Table 2.2 The Hope Assessment Guide**

Stages of Hope	Behavioral Manifestations
1. Initial, realistic assessment of the threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reiteration of the problem, verbally and in thoughts</li> <li>• Seeking to connect with others to discuss or find release</li> <li>• Stressed, frequently to the point of being overwhelmed by the situation</li> <li>• One-way information flow—reiterates or takes in information with few or no questions</li> </ul>
2. Setting goals, envisioning alternative plans, bracing for negative outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking “next steps”</li> <li>• Weighing options</li> <li>• Seeking out those with similar experiences</li> <li>• Entering into two-way discussions</li> <li>• Articulating goals, concrete or abstract</li> <li>• Recognizing the possibility of negative outcomes then compartmentalizing that undesirable possibility</li> <li>• Mental review of relevant past experiences/identifying internal and external resources (human and material)</li> <li>• Checking the reputation of experts involved in care</li> <li>• Evaluating significant others’ ability to “be there” for them</li> </ul>
3. Taking stock (realistic assessment of personal/external resources and conditions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking others who support their goals, that may involve developing new relationships as well as depending on existing ones</li> <li>• Modifying who they turn to for support as goals change</li> </ul>
4. Reaching out (solicitation of mutually supportive relationships)	
5. Looking for signs (continuous evaluation that what they and others are doing is helping)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking clarification of information concerning the odds of achieving their hoped-for goals</li> <li>• Mental review of past experiences as a means of comparing and assessing the current situation</li> <li>• Making comparisons with other survivors</li> </ul>
6. Holding on (determination to persevere)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using a variety of coping techniques</li> <li>• Focusing energy</li> <li>• Expressing a new perspective on life</li> </ul>
<p><i>Adapted with permission from Table 1, pp. 1061-62, Strategies for Assessing and Fostering Hope: The Hope Assessment Guide, Janice Penrod &amp; Janice M. Morse, Oncology Nursing Forum, 24(6), 1997.</i></p>	

Because the material offered in Table 2.2 is self-explanatory, I shall now briefly review the components from the Hope Assessment Guide against the four processes identified by Farran et al. (1995), and then summarize this section before moving to the final section of this chapter.

***Summary of the Hope Assessment Guide***

In selecting four clinical situations representing varying levels of uncertainty and challenge, Penrod and Morse (1997) were able to identify some of the most pertinent thoughts and feelings, including a realistic evaluation of current circumstances

experienced by the individuals in their study, thereby addressing the experiential process of Farran et al.'s (1995) guiding framework of hope. Many of the specific behaviors illustrated by these researchers involved interactions with others, from seeking the support of family and friends, to connecting with new individuals who might support their mission or relate similarly difficult experiences (relational process). Certainly the ability to articulate and pursue goals played a role (rational thought process), including envisioning desired future outcomes, and becoming better informed as to alternative avenues of action. Although there was a surprising lack of specific references to religious or spiritual belief systems within Penrod and Morse's (1997) Hope Assessment Guide, a degree of transcendence, associated with hope within philosophical literatures particularly, is implied in the final stage through the expression of taking a "new perspective on life."

### ***Summary of "How Do We Hope?"***

The four conceptual frameworks of hope outlined in this section have ranged from Scioli's extensively-researched, deductively-developed model of the evolution of hope whose biological underpinnings provide the bedrock upon which hope's daily thoughts, feelings, and actions depend, to the more goal-focused cognitive perspective of Snyder's hope theory. While in no way wishing to denigrate either of these fine contributions to our understanding of hope, nevertheless I felt particularly that the psychological models overly stressed aspects of the hope process at the expense of many others. For example, Snyder's model did not, in my view, adequately address the complex interplay of positive and negative emotions implicated elsewhere in hoping. With respect to Scioli and Biller (n.d.), they appeared arguably to overstate the extent to which faith and spirituality play a part in everyday hope experiences, aspects of hope that were less in evidence in Penrod and Morse's (1997) findings for example. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that there are many different ways that people hope and have noted the similarity between Scioli and Biller's (n.d.) three motives and Averill and Sundararajan's (2005, p. 139) "three types of hope narratives," namely: "wish-based" or mastery oriented, "coping-based" or survival, and the "faith-based" or attachment version of hope.

Whereas the inductive approaches of the two groups of nurse-researchers explicated the lived experience of hope, this was in relation to extreme circumstances that were experienced by narrowly defined populations. As such, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) elegantly captured the distinctions between the hope that is aimed toward goals and thus sustains us when the alternative would be to fear, and the hope that (like *elpis* in Pandora's jar) is all that is left when there is nothing to hope *for* and thus provides an antidote to potential despair. I will discuss further this differentiation between what Godfrey (1987) has termed *fundamental hope* and *aimed hope* in the next and final section of this chapter, in which I address the question, "What are the behavioral and psychological outcomes or consequences of hope under conditions of success and failure?" Or, in short, "Why do we hope?"

### ***Hope's Outcomes and Consequences***

So far in this chapter, I have reviewed the antecedent conditions relevant to hope, together with the multiplicity of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and spiritual factors implicated in the hope process. As we come to the end of this journey through the hope literature it is fitting to investigate what happens to bring about an, albeit temporary, end to hope.

In the studies that resulted in their articulation of the four "rules of hope," Averill et al. (1990) looked at the circumstantial changes that resulted in individuals stopping hoping. Over half the respondents (52.3%) reported that they did so because their hopes had been fulfilled and that they had "obtained what I was hoping for" (p. 26). The next largest category, representing 16.1% of responses, suggested that participants had stopped hoping because they perceived the likelihood of attaining the hoped-for outcome to be lower than they had originally thought. These researchers found some interesting differences among the two groups, namely those whose hopes had been fulfilled and those whose hopes had been thwarted in some way. The fulfilled group described their hopes as more important and they rated their chances of success higher than those whose hopes were not met. As Averill et al. (1990) articulated, the former participants in considering their hopes to be more important may simply have worked harder to ensure

that their chances of success improved. Additionally, a higher level of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), or confidence in their ability to achieve desired outcomes, may have fueled the effort and perseverance required to fulfill their hoped-for goals.

Two further results reported by Averill et al. (1990) are of particular note. The first is that, irrespective of whether or not their hopes were fulfilled, all participants reported trying harder and becoming better organized in connection with hoping. This suggests that hope is connected with effortful activities that do not necessarily depend on the desired outcome actually occurring. The second interesting finding was that the unfulfilled hopes group reported becoming more cautious as they pursued their hoped-for goals, reminding me of the old adage, "Fortune favors the brave."

It is easy to imagine how hope might be sustained and enthusiastically embraced, or substituted entirely by optimism, on future occasions when outcomes are consistently successful. But how is hope maintained over time when an individual is faced with a) outcomes with a very low perceived probability of success; and b) changing circumstances that turn anticipated success to imminent failure? This, I believe, is where the meaning inherent in hope becomes important, particularly so in high stress situations. As Benner and Wrubel (1989, cited in Cutcliffe, 1995) have articulated:

Even when no treatment is available and no cure is possible, understanding the meaning of the illness for the person and for that person's life is a form of healing, in that such understanding can overcome the sense of alienation, loss of self-understanding, and loss of social integration. (p. 894).

In that regard there is a courage implied in hope that accepts, in the manner of the serenity prayer, the things that cannot be changed, to change those things that can, and be granted the wisdom to know the difference. Certainly, when hope is examined in extreme circumstances such as those faced by cancer patients or others with life-threatening conditions, two clear patterns emerge.

The first of these patterns concerns the value of taking action, thereby improving the odds of success, and wresting control in otherwise despairing circumstances. In investigating the process of hoping undertaken by patients with end-stage renal disease

captured through in-depth interviews, Davison and Simpson (2006) reported that gaining more information with which to evaluate and select options was crucial to the balance of hope over fear. As one respondent admitted,

I'm afraid of dialysis. I'm afraid of dying. I'm afraid, so strategies like information knock this fear down to a reasonable size and the only one I've managed to come up with so far is information.

As Penrod and Morse (1997) have identified, actions associated with hoped-for goals include identifying supportive others. In her review of “hope-fostering strategies” articulated by participants within a number of qualitative studies conducted by nurses, Herth (2005) identified “connectedness” to be the most commonly employed success strategy, certainly more so than identifying specific hope objects to focus on. As Beavers and Kaslow (1981) have identified, “hope does not exist in a vacuum, but rather in shared experiences with others” (p. 125).

The second pattern identified within clinical populations that helped to sustain hope, involved the earlier explication of the difference between particularized or aimed hope, and generalized or fundamental hope. As Kylmä and Vehviläinen-Julkunen (1997) have suggested, there may be occasions when “*being* may be more important to hope than *doing*; the imminent death of a relative is one example of the many situations where this applies” (p. 367 - my italics). Indeed, although control is more commonly associated with the aimed hope that has a specific hoped-for goal or outcome, it is intuitively obvious that an individual’s ultimate control lies in how they choose to conduct themselves in their final moments, even in choosing how to die.

### ***Chapter Summary***

In this chapter I have reviewed what various commentators on hope across time, culture, and different scholarly domains have had to say about the “who?” “when?” “what?” “why?” and “how?” of hoping. Hope is not a uni-dimensional construct as was once thought but a complex, multidimensional, dynamic resource that sustains us against the fear inherent in uncertain and difficult circumstances, as well as the despair of



conditions under which there is nothing left to do but hope. Although the extreme circumstances facing the participants engaged in many of the studies conducted by nurse-researchers are beyond anything that I expected my participants to have experienced, I felt it was important to examine hope from the perspectives of those who are sustained by hope in real-life situations, in particular comparing and contrasting those explications of hope with the more deductively arrived-at postulations common to the psychological literature.

Certainly this review of the literature provided a wealth of understanding as to the different stages in the hope process by which individuals buoy themselves up in difficult circumstances. It also helped to support my decision largely to eschew self-report instruments and other quantitative methodologies in order to try and get to the heart of what hope means to young adults facing a variety of challenges. Thus, I selected a qualitative approach that involved semi-structured interviews whose data were analyzed using grounded theory techniques. How I conducted these studies is outlined in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHOD**

In this chapter I describe the methods and procedures I used in order to gather and analyze data. This study was comprised of a pilot project, the main study, and the testing of an emergent model against a test or “hold-out” sample. The chapter is divided into the following five sections: a) overall approach and rationale; b) research sites and participants; c) data sources and procedures; d) data analysis; and e) methods used to establish trustworthiness.

#### **Overall Approach and Rationale**

My main focus for this dissertation study was to discover how and why, given that they faced similar levels of challenge and uncertainty, some young adults were able to maintain high hopes for their future while their lower hope peers were not. Stemming from my interest in a more integrative model of hope, one that addresses philosophical, theological, medical health, as well as psychological perspectives, I also wanted to explore the social nature of hope that had been frequently overlooked in contemporary psychological models.

I designed this study to focus on young adults facing a variety of life challenges for several reasons. As explicated in Chapter Two, hope is elicited in conditions of challenge and uncertainty. Therefore, I considered it important to study hope among a population that almost daily faces obstacles to the attainment of personally significant goals, such as we might expect of young people moving into adulthood who were additionally experiencing difficult life circumstances including homelessness, low academic attainment, unemployment, and teenage parenthood.

I decided to conduct in-depth interviews as opposed to other methodologies. Field methods such as observation, for example, would have posed a particular problem for a construct such as hope that has no identifiable associated vocal expressions, facial expressions, specific action tendencies, or physiological symptoms. I was therefore

informed by Schorr (2001) who articulated that of the various methods aimed at the subjective measurement of appraisals, “researchers rate the in-depth interview as the most positive” (p. 335).

## **Research Sites and Participants**

### ***Pilot Study***

The pilot study was not originally conceived as contributing data to this study, but was conducted principally in order to test instruments and procedures, as well as provide data for a course paper on conducting grounded theory approaches that required no more than four interviewees. During my proposal defense, at which I reported preliminary findings based on data from these four interview participants, my dissertation committee agreed that these pilot data could be incorporated into the main findings. It is for that reason that I outline the participants and procedures for this pilot project here.

In the early part of fall 2006, I contacted key personnel within various youth services agencies, with whom I already had established relationships through a separate research project, to ask if they would allow me to recruit their clients to participate in a preliminary study in order that I might pilot the instruments and procedures that I was planning to use for my dissertation research. Two agencies, a youth services organization, and a charter high school, both located in a large city in the southwestern part of the United States, agreed to this participation. These sites subsequently allowed me to recruit additional participants for the main study.

In order to participate in the study, individuals had to be between the ages of 18 and 22 years, be fluent in the English language, and sign an informed consent form as approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of The University of Texas at Austin. The services provided by the two pilot agencies was such that I was able to recruit individuals facing a diverse range of disadvantaged and challenging circumstances including teenage pregnancy, lower academic attainment, contact with the criminal justice system, unemployment, and low income status.

The pilot study was comprised of two parts, a quantitative part and a qualitative part, and I replicated this procedure within the main study. Table 3.1 on page 70 outlines how many individuals participated in each part of the entire study, together with the names of those who contributed interview data from the various field sites.

### ***Quantitative Data Gathering***

A copy of the flyer that I used to recruit participants across field sites can be found in Appendix A. I first gathered self-report data in several group settings at the relevant organizations' premises where writing surfaces, chairs, and computer access were provided. Of the 25 participants who took part in the pilot, one person did not adequately complete the materials and was subsequently dropped from the study (n=24). Each individual was handed a packet of materials containing the following:

- Demographics questionnaire – including a space for participants to give their contact details if they agreed to take part in follow-up, one-on-one interviews (see Appendix B for a copy);
- Bruininks Hopefulness Measure (see Appendix C for a copy of this instrument);
- Hinds Hopefulness Scale for Adolescents – a visual analog self-report scale developed using grounded theory to measure levels of hope among adolescents;
- Social Connectedness Scale–Revised developed by Lee, Draper, and Lee (2001). (see Appendix D for a copy of this instrument);
- Written assignment (see Appendix E) – participants were to type on the computer (or hand-write on paper) their response to the following stimulus:

“I’d like you to consider what your thoughts and feelings are at this moment. Please write about those thoughts and feelings as they come to you. For example, you might explore what is going on in your life right now and how you think and feel about your education, relationships with family and friends, your work, or anything else.”

The wording of these instructions was informed by the work of Pennebaker and his colleagues (e.g., Rude, Gortner, & Pennebaker, 2004). The instructions for this assignment stressed that participants should write continuously for 15

minutes without worrying about grammar, sentence structure, or spelling, and that the goal was for them to express in their writing the way their mind worked naturally. At the end of the 15 minutes, they were asked to save their work as “Study\_(their unique code number)” to the desktop of the computer on which they were working.

At the end of their participation, I emailed each of the essays to my university email account and, upon ensuring that these were received in my Inbox, I deleted all essays from the desktop and the trash folder of the individual computers so that no other record of them existed. These essays, identified only by the participants’ unique codes, were printed out and stored in each individual participant’s folder that contained the other completed instruments.

*Timing, order effects, and payments.* Aside from the 15 minutes’ time constraint on the written assignment, participants were told they could complete the instruments in their packets at their own pace. Each packet, and all of the instruments contained within it, was marked with a unique alphabetical and numerical code so that none of the documents, apart from the informed consent form and the demographics questionnaire, contained the name or other personal details of the respondents. The order in which participants were asked to complete the self-report measures and the writing assignment were counterbalanced in order to mitigate order effects. Large, bold numbers were written on the top right hand corner of each instrument to indicate the order in which they were to be completed. I talked briefly to each group on how to complete the measures and asked if anyone had any questions. I addressed questions throughout the session as they came up. Most of the participants took around 40-50 minutes to complete the packets. When they had done so, I quickly checked the instruments to ensure no data were missing and gave each participant \$10 cash.

*Selection criteria for the qualitative portion of the study.* Data from the quantitative part of the study were used to select purposively a smaller number of respondents to take part in follow-up, one-on-one, in-depth interviews. As suggested by Weiss (1994) concerning samples that attempt to maximize range, I was looking for

contrasts among the potentially important variables as my selection criteria. Having produced total scores for each participant for each of the three self-report measures (Bruininks hope, Hinds hope, Social Connectedness Scale), I then converted these to Z-scores as each instrument had used a different scoring range. This allowed me to identify where each participant fell in relation to other participants on a particular measure, as well as compare scores across measures.

I was particularly looking for individuals whose scores represented higher or lower levels of hope. Participants whose z scores on the Bruininks Hopefulness Measure were in the first (lower hope) and fourth (higher hope) quartiles, together with those whose responses on the Social Connectedness Scale-Revised suggested a higher or lower level of interpersonal closeness were identified as meeting the criteria for the qualitative study. Only seven of the original 24 pilot participants met these criteria, the rest having scored average levels of hope, and of this number only four were both contactable and agreed to be interviewed. As mentioned earlier, four was considered an adequate number of participants to report on for my course paper, and it was these individuals whose data were subsequently included in this study. Three of these participants (Lyle, Lorne, and Loretta) represented lower hope, with one (Hazel) representing higher hope. A more complete outline of the qualitative data gathering procedure, together with an illustrative table (Table 3.1) appears in the next section, concerning the main study.

*Instrument issues.* It had become obvious during the completion of the packets, and when analyzing the data, that participants had some difficulty with the Hinds Hopefulness Scale. They misread certain double negative items, and some of them misunderstood how to complete the visual analog scale despite my explaining it beforehand. Possibly because of an increase in response error, the results of this hope measure did not appear to contribute accurate triangulated data. I therefore decided not to incorporate these findings into my criteria for selecting qualitative study participants. Further, I decided not to use this second hope measure for the main study.

Additionally, although I had analyzed the pilot essays using Pennebaker and Francis' (1999) Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC), the resulting quantitative

data of salient variables including positive emotions, negative emotions, optimism, social words, and temporality were inconclusively related to the data from the two self-report measures. For that reason, and also because I wanted to focus largely on the rich data provided by the qualitative analyses, the LIWC procedure was also subsequently dropped from the main study.

### *Additional Learning from the Pilot*

In addition to the changes already mentioned, conducting the pilot study helped me to plan the main study by taking into account the following:

- Ensuring I had multiple ways to contact the participants. Three weeks after conducting the first interviews with the pilot participants only the lower hope woman was still contactable. For the main study I strengthened my chances of reducing such attrition and indeed was successful in doing so, by collecting where applicable a home phone number, cell phone number, email address, and mailing address.
- Including a cognitive interview so that participants could explain why they responded to the self-report items in the way that they did. This was particularly useful in terms of helping explain anomalies in the data. For example, although most response patterns demonstrated that higher hope individuals also had higher levels of social connectedness, in a few cases higher hope was associated with average levels of social connectedness. The cognitive interview, included as part of the second interview with the main study participants, allowed me to understand better why this occurred. Indeed, this makes for an interesting section that I have included in Chapter Six, concerning issues associated with the use of self-report instruments.
- The psychometric analysis I conducted on the Bruininks Hopefulness Measure indicated no statistically significant differences in scores across ethnic groups or by gender. While the accuracy of such findings may have been affected by the small sample size, similar findings have been reported elsewhere (e.g., Snyder et al., 1991). Additionally, Lee et al. (2001) who developed the Social

Connectedness Scale-Revised (SCS-R) also reported no significant differences on the SCS-R by gender or race. Therefore I elected not to focus on issues of ethnicity or gender when analyzing these data, although the issue of differences in the hoped-for goals between the male and female participants in this study is addressed briefly in Chapter Five.

- I decided that instead of focusing on those participants whose hope and social connectedness fell within the first and fourth quartiles of score data, I wanted to include less extreme cases. Therefore I changed how I categorized the participants into higher, average, or lower hope groups as I explain in the next section.

### ***Main Study***

Given that the main study proceeded identically to that of the pilot, I describe below only what was different. The following table (Table 3.1) will be explained in more detail shortly, but its purpose is to outline the number of participants from each portion of the overall project, together with the names of those whose interview data contributed to the qualitative part of the study.



**Table 3.1 Study Participants Across Field Sites**

Field Sites	# of Initial Respondents	Quantitative Part			Qualitative Part		
		Outside of Score Criteria	Unavailable for Study <sup>3</sup>	Remaining Participants	Lower Hope	Higher Hope	Changers
<b>A. Pilot Study Sample   24 Initial Respondents   4 Interviewees</b>							
Charter High School	16				Lyle Lorne Loretta	Hazel	
Youth Services Organization	8						
Total	24	17 <sup>1</sup>	3	4			
<b>B. Main Study Sample   39 Initial Respondents   9 Interviewees</b>							
Charter High School	17				Lacey	Honora Helen Harmony Hilary Henry Hector	Chantal Chuck
Youth Services Organization	11						
Peer Educator Program	11						
Total	39	19 <sup>2</sup>	11	9			
<b>C. Hold Out Sample   13 Initial Respondents   3 Interviewees</b>							
Mainstream High School	13	7 <sup>2</sup>	3	3		Troy Tamara Tomas	

Notes:

1. Respondents who scored average on the hope measure.
2. Respondents who scored either average or at the extremes of the hope measure.
3. Respondents who were not contactable or declined to be interviewed.

***Research Sites***

Between February 2007 and October 2007, data were collected from 39 young adults aged between 18 and 22 years, recruited through the two field sites that had participated in the pilot study, plus an additional field site representing a peer educator program. My connection with this latter organization came about as a result of those original connections, when I made it known that I was looking to broaden the size of the main study sample. Additionally, given that I was interested in testing the resulting hope model against a separate sample, representing young adults who were still in mainstream

schooling, I approached the principals of two local high schools. One of them agreed to allow me to collect data and, upon receiving the appropriate approval from the school district, I collected data from this “hold-out” sample.

A description of each of these four field sites follows, together with brief quantitative data. Table 3.2 outlines descriptive statistics for each of the hope and social connectedness measures, by field sites and in total. It should be noted that this time I had decided to interview only those representing mid-ranges of higher and lower hope scores, rather than participants who represented more extreme scores on hope and social connectedness. Therefore the criteria for being assigned to either the higher or lower hope group were changed from those used for the pilot study, and represented  $z$  scores that fell within the range of  $\pm 0.5-1.5Z$  on hope.

**Table 3.2 Descriptive Statistics by Measure and Field Site**

	Charter High School	Youth Services Org	Peer Educator Program	Overall (3 Main Study Sites Only; $n=39$ )	Mainstream High School
<b>HOPE</b>					
<b>Mean</b>	65.47	75.18	79.36	72.13	75.31
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	7.83	9.11	5.50	9.66	11.03
<b>Score Range</b>	44–77	55–88	72–87	44–88	53–90
<b>SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS</b>					
<b>Mean</b>	78.18	91.36	96.00	86.90	87.85
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	14.57	10.65	9.21	14.33	20.03
<b>Score Range</b>	47–97	82–111	82–108	47–111	40–110

*Charter high school.* The charter high school offered computerized, self-paced learning primarily for young people who had dropped out of mainstream education on at least one occasion. It served approximately 800 students across two sites whose ethnic

compositions were: Hispanic (57%), African American (27%), and White/Anglo (18%). The school had an approximate 50:50 ratio of men to women with 63% of students from low SES households, 22% on parole or probation, and 13% who were teenage parents.

For this study, 17 students self-selected to participate, of which eight were women and nine men. Their ethnicities were self-reported as Hispanic ( $n=6$ ), White ( $n=5$ ), African American ( $n=3$ ), and Other ( $n=3$ ). From this field site, after eliminating participants who did not meet the  $z$  score criteria, together with those who were unavailable to participate further in the study (i.e., were uncontactable or did not wish to be interviewed), I was left with four individuals: one lower hope interviewee, to whom I gave the name Lacey, two whose scores had changed considerably across several implementations and I categorized as a separate group of “changers” (Chuck and Chantal), and one higher hope participant (Hazel). Lyle, from the pilot project, had also been recruited from this field site.

*Youth services organization.* A second site was a youth and adult services organization that offered GED preparation courses, assisted with the cost of their education, and made available services that helped their “clients” to prepare for, find, and maintain employment. Specifically, each client was assigned a case manager who was on hand to help them achieve their specified academic and job goals. From this site I recruited 11 participants. The gender breakdown was eight women and three men, and the ethnic composition was Hispanic ( $n=4$ ); African American ( $n=4$ ); White ( $n=2$ ); Native American ( $n=1$ ). Again, after excluding those who did not meet the selection criteria with respect to their hope scores, and separating out those who did not want to be interviewed or could not be contacted, I was left with two higher hope interviewees (Honora and Hector). Two lower hope individuals (Lorne and Loretta) had previously been recruited from this field site during the pilot.

*Peer educator program.* All of the participants from this third field site were teen or young adult parents, a few of them were married, but most of them were raising their children as single parents. The program was funded by a non-profit agency that had trained these young people to be peer educators and to go into high schools to talk about

the challenges of early parenthood. Peer educators were recruited via flyers in schools and through on-line sites such as Craig's List. There was an intensive screening process before individuals could join the team. After discussing this project with the program administrator, I recruited 11 participants, of which there were eight women and three men. The ethnic composition was Hispanic ( $n=4$ ); African American ( $n=3$ ); White ( $n=2$ ); and Other ( $n=2$ ). Of these, five individuals did not meet the selection criteria with respect to their hope scores, and an additional two did not want to be interviewed or could not be contacted. This program therefore provided four of the higher hope interviewees (Helen, Harmony, Hilary, and Henry).

I was concerned that the training offered to the teenage parent peer educators recruited from this field site might have been the main reason why there were so many higher hope individuals in this group. Therefore, I engaged in a form of triangulation by interviewing the program coordinator about this issue and analyzing transcripts of focus groups that she subsequently sent to me. That the peer educators were originally selected on the basis of having "a firm understanding of their experience," a desire to engage in community service, and an ability to articulate their personal stories led me to conclude that participation in the program was a potential effect of their higher levels of hope, rather than its cause.

*Mainstream high school.* I wanted to recruit a hold-out sample of participants from a high school whose students were relatively similar to the participants in the main study, particularly with respect to the challenge and uncertainty they faced. The high school I found seemed appropriate both in terms of the ethnic composition of its students and the academic and other challenges facing them. Enrolment was just over 2,000 students in grades 9-12 for the 2005-2006 school year, of which approximately 60% were Hispanic, 30% White, and 10% African American. Of these, over half of the students were considered to be economically disadvantaged (51.3%), approximately a quarter had mobility issues (24.9%), and 10.6% had limited English proficiency.

At the time that I was looking for a suitable mainstream high school, the latest-available School Report Card (2005-2006) from the Texas Education Agency (TEA –

available online at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/cgi/sas/broker>), showed the School Accountability Rating for this high school (hereafter referred to as MHS) was “academically unacceptable.” It should be noted, however, that the Campus Performance Report for 2006-2007 rated this school as “academically acceptable.”

I recruited 13 participants from this field site, comprising five women and eight men, whose ethnic composition was Hispanic ( $n=8$ ); White ( $n=4$ ); and African American ( $n=1$ ). Of these, seven fell within the average range of hope and therefore did not meet the criteria for inclusion in the qualitative part of this study, and three others did not wish to be interviewed or could not be contacted. The three remaining participants represented the second, third, and fourth highest scores on hope and these data were used to test the emergent model.

### ***Participants***

With respect to the main study, 39 young adults aged between 18 and 22 years, recruited from the three main field sites outlined above participated in the initial, quantitative phase of this study. After analyzing data from the two self-report instruments, I assigned  $z$  scores and used these to sample purposively 13 participants whose hope scores fell within the range of  $-1.5Z$  to  $-0.5Z$  (lower hope) or  $0.5Z$  to  $1.5Z$  (higher hope). Individuals whose scores were between  $-0.49Z$  and  $0.49Z$  were considered to be of average hope and were not contacted further. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, in most cases the hope scores were not static, changing either modestly or dramatically from implementation to implementation. Where large differences in scores on both the hope and social connectedness scales were evident I designated these individuals as belonging to a separate group, calling them “changers.”

Nine individuals met the above criteria for participation in the qualitative portion of the main study, had indicated that they would be willing to be interviewed, and were still contactable after the quantitative part. With the four participants from the pilot study, this brought my total  $n$  for the qualitative part of the main study to 13. Of these, four had lower hope scores (Lyle, Loretta, Lorne, and Lacey), two were “changers” (Chantal, and Chuck), and seven had higher hope scores (Honora, Helen, Harmony, Hazel, Hilary,

Henry, and Hector). In addition, there were three higher hope participants (Tomas, Tamara, and Troy) in the hold-out sample, bringing the total number whose data contributed to the development and test of this model to 16. It should be noted that it is typical for mainly qualitative studies, such as this was, to proceed with a smaller sample of participants than would be the case for wholly quantitative studies.

In order to ease identification within each group, as well as to ensure anonymity, members of the lower hope group were given names beginning with L, whereas those within the higher hope were given names beginning with H. In the case of the two “changers,” i.e., the individuals who had originally scored lower on hope but, by the first and second interviews had increased their scores to average or higher, they received names beginning with C. Members of the hold-out or “test” sample were accorded names beginning with T.

### ***Data Sources and Procedures***

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from The University of Texas at Austin was obtained prior to conducting this study. Ethical considerations were met by assigning each participant a code number as the sole means of identification on audio-tapes and transcripts. After reading and signing the informed consent form, each of the 39 main study participants completed a packet comprising the Bruininks Hopefulness Measure (Bruininks, unpublished), the Social Connectedness Scale-Revised (Lee et al., 2001), plus the same demographic questionnaire and short written assignment that were used in the pilot study. Each session lasted approximately one hour, for which the participants were paid \$10 cash.

### ***Bruininks Hopefulness Measure***

The Bruininks Hopefulness Measure (BHM) is a self-report measure developed to help identify a person’s level of hope. Part of each item identifies a specific context and the other part suggests how a person might think, feel, or behave in such a situation. This instrument is comprised of 20 items divided into four factor-analytically derived subscales: future-orientedness (five items, e.g., “When times are tough I believe that

better things are coming”), emotional regulation/positive affect (seven items, e.g., “Even when life is at its worst I remain in good spirits”), imagination (four items, e.g., “When an outcome is uncertain I imagine many ways in which it could turn out well”), and perseverance (four items, e.g., “Even if I want something very badly I tend to give up if I think I may not get it” – reversed item). Participants are directed to respond to a five-point Likert format (1=*strongly disagree*, 5=*strongly agree*). This measure had been normed on undergraduates and non-college students. Total hope scores range from a low of 20 to a high of 100, with higher scores indicating higher levels of hope.

No psychometric data were forthcoming from the developer of this measure. However, I had used this instrument during the pilot project and those data suggested that it did validly discern differences between higher hope and lower hope individuals. Given that at the time of my study the BHM appeared to be the only contextually-embedded hope scale yet developed, I decided to continue using this instrument.

#### ***Social Connectedness Scale-Revised***

This revised measure of social connectedness (SCS-R; Lee et al., 2001), as proposed by Kohut’s (1984) self psychology theory, was developed out of a concern to address the “psychometric limitations” (Lee et al., 2001, p. 311) of the original Lee and Robbins (1995) self-report scale whose eight negatively worded items had produced negatively skewed data. The SCS-R is a 20-item scale on a six-point Likert continuum (1=*strongly disagree*, 6=*strongly agree*). It was normed on an undergraduate sample with a mean age of 19.35 years (SD=3.32, range=17-50 years). Scores range from 20 to 120 with higher scores indicating a stronger sense of social connectedness. The means and standard deviations for three studies (scale development, validation study, and a further study) reported by Lee et al. (2001) were 88.02 (SD=16.82), 89.84 (SD=15.44), and 91.90 (SD=14.83) respectively. The mean and standard deviation for my pilot sample was 89.25 (SD=14.20). The SCS-R has shown strong internal consistency with coefficient alpha values across the above-mentioned studies of .94, .92, and .92 respectively. Lee et al. (2001) reported no significant differences on the SCS-R by gender or ethnicity.

### *Written Assignment*

Details of the written assignment have already been covered in the earlier section outlining the pilot study, and no changes were made to that procedure.

### *Interviews*

My goal with the qualitative study was to collect the personal perspectives of purposively sampled participants who represented either higher or lower hope. I had contacted 13 such individuals for the main study, all of whom agreed to take part in individual interview sessions lasting between 60 and 90 minutes each. These interviews were conducted at locations convenient and agreeable to each interviewee. Some took place at premises within the school or organization through which they had been recruited. Other interview sessions occurred at the participants' homes. All participants agreed to my recording them and so audio-taped recordings were made of each interview that were then transcribed and coded for salient themes. No personally identifying information appeared on the audio tapes or on the transcriptions, and I was the only person who transcribed the tapes.

As Arksey and Knight (1999) have articulated, unstructured interviews present the problem of participants engaging in stories that have no relevance to the topic under investigation. On the other hand, Terkel (1997) recommended flexibility, particularly for an exploratory study such as this one. The questions guiding the semi-structured interviews were designed to explore issues concerning the participants' academic and career goals, social resources, and their thoughts and feelings concerning their future lives. In particular I was guided by the four original themes of hope articulated by Aquinas, namely: temporality ("future"), goals ("good"), challenge ("difficult"), and what participants considered was possible for them to achieve, and why. These questions then became part of the substantive frame I used to initiate the conversations.

The number and nature of the questions I asked differed according to the specific conversational avenues taken by each interviewee. Nevertheless, as proposed by Spradley (1979), these included descriptive questions (e.g., Could you tell me something about your experience in high school?), structural questions (e.g., What things are you doing or



plan to do to make that goal a reality?), and contrast questions (e.g., What about your best friend? Was it the same experience for her?). Where considered relevant, data from each participant's written assignment were also used to explore issues that appeared important to them.

I recognized early on that many of the questions would require a considerable degree of self-reflexivity and the ease with which participants responded, together with their ability to offer supporting examples, was hypothesized to be an additional, potentially differentiating factor between the higher hope and lower hope groups. As will be explicated shortly, the ability to introspect indeed appeared to be one of the factors that differentiated these two groups.

Despite asking general questions at first, themes of education, work, and close personal relationships, as suggested by Erikson's (1958, 1963) psychosocial development model, emerged naturally from the interviews. Indeed, it is worth noting that themes consistent with the human developmental literature occurred throughout the essays that each participant wrote during the quantitative study. Work, education, independence from family, relationships, and money were themes common to most of the essays. Female participants with children, or those who were pregnant, also wrote about their aspirations for their offspring and how they intended to be better parents than their own parents had been to them.

After the first few questions, I allowed each conversation to be guided by the responses given by the participants, while at the same time ensuring that topics remained within the substantive frame. Similar guiding questions were prepared for the second and subsequent interviews, during which time I engaged in member checking to ensure my interpretations of previously discussed points were accurate, I asked for clarification of issues from the first interview, and I also asked participants to describe a time when they experienced hope. The substantive frame for the interview sessions conducted as part of the main study are outlined in Appendix F.

With respect to the tone of the exchange, Plummer (2001) recommended that the researcher not think of the interview as simply questions followed by answers, nor should

it be handled like a regular conversation because the researcher needs to listen more than she talks. Indeed, Plummer (2001) suggested that the researcher think of herself as “the non-directive, phenomenologically-aware counselor,” and this is the approach I took. Whereas it was important to listen more than I spoke, where necessary I responded authentically to what the participant was telling me. On a few occasions, the questions I asked were clumsily phrased and had to be explained more clearly but, despite the age, education, and nationality differences between me and the participants, I appeared to use no terminology that they found difficult to comprehend. I did not deliberately try to relate to these young adults by using generation-salient language; I determined just to be myself, and that seemed to be the best approach.

### *Data Analysis*

I used a grounded theory approach, based on recommendations offered by Strauss and Corbin (1998), to code and analyze the qualitative data. In contrast to other qualitative research methodologies such as ethnography or phenomenology, the distinguishing feature of grounded theory is that it focuses on theory development rather than pure description. As such I considered it to be particularly suitable for inductively deriving a model of hope, based on themes that have been identified from the various procedures that are used to analyze the data.

The first of these procedures in Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) grounded theory analytical process is known as *open coding*, which is rather like finding the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle and sorting them according to their different properties and dimensions. Having read through each transcribed interview in full beforehand, I conducted open coding on each interview shortly after completing each transcription, in order to identify some salient categories. After all the interviews had been transcribed, I then began a second round of open coding in order to ensure I had not previously missed any important categories due to mood or preoccupations, and to take into account a greater appreciation of the themes being articulated by the group as a whole. The transcripts of the four lower hope, two “changers,” and seven higher hope participants generated 429 pages of text. Given this large quantity of transcription data, I engaged in a paragraph-by-

paragraph (rather than line-by-line) analysis, highlighting what I believed to be important quotes that answered the question, “What is going on here?” At the conclusion of the open coding phase, I had generated 463 coded extracts that I entered into an Excel spreadsheet to facilitate the next step in the grounded theory data analysis, known as *axial coding*.

The intention with axial coding is that the researcher re-assembles the data that had been broken into pieces by open coding, from which would emerge a clustering of concepts around fewer organizing themes. I like to think of this as the qualitative equivalent of the data reduction produced by factor analysis in quantitative studies. The steps I took began with reviewing each of the codes within the Excel spreadsheet and grouping them, where applicable, around themes that have long been associated with hope, such as goals, future time orientation, and strategies for dealing with challenge and adversity. Nevertheless, these themes simply provided me with a place to start, and I was mindful of not trying to fit the data into any pre-conceived components of hope.

It soon became clear that some of these initial groupings were so intricately linked that they made no sense unless organized together. For example, it seemed pertinent to group references to the past, present, and future into a single, temporal theme labeled “temporal comparisons,” and to do likewise with the articulations around values, goals, planning, and action. After continually revising the organizing themes produced by axial coding, I ended up with the following five major themes:

- The Initiating Context: Perceptions of challenge and uncertainty
- Temporal Comparisons: Learning from the past, envisioning the future, being realistic about the present
- Developing Strategies: Values, goals, planning, and action
- Drawing on personal and social resources
- Openness and flexibility about outcomes

**Table 3.3 Example Quotes Associated with Each of the Five Emergent Themes**

Theme	Sub-theme	Transcript Examples
The Initiating Context	Perceptions of challenge & uncertainty	"I was really overwhelmed with the whole situation (health problems at school resulting in being taken to court for truancy) so it was just like, "Okay, I'll give in and get this over with and see maybe if I can do something in the future." (Hector)
Temporal Comparisons	Learning from the past	"I have to be careful about having really committed friendships, especially when I know that I have a lot of things I'm working on myself, and I really want to focus on those things. I have to be really careful of that because I really get into people's problems and pain and suffering, and I will take them on." (Hilary)
	Envisioning the future	"I would see myself as the head of a non-profit like (name). I could totally see myself doing something like that because I'm barely twenty and she's (the current CEO) in her 40s so that's like 20 years to build on what I am now." (Hazel)
	Being realistic about the present	"As soon as I found out I was pregnant I was like, "OK, this is serious, I need to focus on school, I need to look into colleges, I need to look and see what I need to do and so, like, everything changed from that point." (Helen)
Developing Strategies	Values	"I want to become a better, productive person for society, basically." (Hector) "One of my biggest drives has been respect." (Hazel) "If it's taking away from my family I am not going to be able to pursue it even though it is my dream, the family's always going to come first." (Harmony)
	Goals	"By the time I'm 28 I want to have a Lexus, a home, make a comfortable enough living that I can pay my parent's car payment, have money for my kids to go to college, savings, and have minimal debt." (Henry) "I want to start my own non-profit organization and I know I would definitely offer services to people with family that's incarcerated." (Hilary)
	Planning	"I'm also going to go into the 8 months training for becoming a nurse assistant. It's good to have something to fall back on because, God forbid, if something does happen in the future and I can't be a police officer I will something I can follow up on." (Harmony)
	Action	"I knew that I wanted to be a secretary, so as soon as I turned 18 I signed up for AmeriCorps." (Hazel) "I don't like stressing myself out by thinking negatively, or staying angry or always thinking about bad stuff. You need to get over that and get on with doing something." (Honora)
Drawing on Resources	Character strengths	"I'm going to make my life better for myself. No-one in my family's going to be able to do it, no-one around me is going to make my life what I want it to be, so I need to do it for myself." (Hector) "Even on the days when I was tired and she was a baby and I had gotten up with her three times in the night I still woke up every day at seven and I went to school." (Hazel)

*continued on next page*

**Table 3.3 Example Quotes Associated with Each of the Five Emergent Themes, continued**

Theme	Sub-theme	Transcript Examples
	Social resources	<p>“Yesterday I had to take my test and my mom had court and we did not have nobody to watch the kids because she’s usually home and does that. She was like, “We’ll just figure something out” and it was hard, calling people at seven in the morning but my mom’s husband, the friend he works with said “My wife would watch them, she’s home and only has one kid” and she said, “I’ll watch them.” (Honora)</p> <p>“I’ve always, like, gone on the Internet or just, like, there’s a lot of resources in (city), you’ve just got to ask people.” (Hazel)</p>
Openness and flexibility about outcomes	Benefit finding	<p>“It’s actually going through struggles that actually gets you what you want. I know with my husband I had to go through fights as well, relationship things to make our relationship stronger...so that’s how it all falls into place.” (Harmony)</p> <p>“It’s been this jail time, I’m telling you. When he (her fiancé) had to sit back and see the world for what it was and kind of deal with it in prison then we were able to open communications. And we were able to get those conversations started for me to say: “These are the things you fell short in,” and he would say the same thing to me. (Hilary)</p>

Further refinement of these emergent themes, together with a constant re-examination of the categories that contributed to them, resulted in my recognizing the “central explanatory concept” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 161) that is produced by *selective coding*. I was inspired to discover this through a conversation I had with a peer debriefer, during which I found myself stating what seems so obvious now but had escaped me thus far, that hope for these participants was not just an outcome or a process but an orientation to the world that indicated their relationship with *change*, as it related to difficult circumstances with uncertain outcomes. According to Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) guidelines on selective coding, this focus on relationship with change did indeed adhere to the “criteria for choosing a central category” (p. 147). Not only was it “sufficiently abstract” and directly related to the five major themes or categories that had emerged from axial coding, but it enabled me to explain the differences I was seeing between the higher hope and lower hope groups.

Having sketched a rough model that was subsequently revised many times before arriving at the one presented in Chapter Five (see Figure 4 on page 186), I then went back to the data to conduct what Strauss and Corbin (1998) have called “coding for process”

(p. 163). Having presented an early version of my model to a psychologist friend, I realized that whereas I had clearly articulated the various themes or stages in the process of hope, I had failed to articulate how the higher hope participants moved from one to the other. I recognized then that whereas I had focused my coding on “what” was happening with my participants, I needed to pay greater attention to “how” they were navigating between themes. The Excel spreadsheet that contained many hundreds of coded extracts, together with the pseudonyms and code numbers of the participants, allowed me to go back to the original transcripts to conduct this process analysis at the general theory level. My data supported this approach given that, despite their shared circumstances of challenge and uncertainty, my participants represented a wealth of different contexts necessary to the formulation of a general theory of hope. Some of my participants, for example, were focused on educational goals, others on their careers, still others were concerned with relationships with their children, current partners, or just generally getting on in life. Some were low SES, some came from middle-class backgrounds. Some perceived their family experiences to be positive and stable, while others reported parental absence, neglect, and abuse. This additional, essential part of the analytical process served to enrich and clarify the resulting grounded theory model.

#### ***Methods Used to Establish Trustworthiness***

The concepts of reliability, validity, and objectivity that are vital to addressing the veracity of quantitative research are known as *credibility*, *dependability*, *transferability*, and *confirmability* when related to qualitative methodologies (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002). In order to demonstrate that I accounted for these issues in the design and implementation of my study, I offer the following evidence of the standards I adhered to throughout. As such I have combined the validity checklist provided by Maxwell (2005) with the strategies proposed by Ary et al. (2002).

## *Issues of Credibility*

### *Researcher Bias*

Throughout this study I had no vested interest in making my data fit any particular pre-conceived notion of what hope *is*. Indeed, given the paucity of qualitative hope studies within the psychological literature, and the current complexity with respect to the number of conceptualizations and operationalizations of hope across disciplines, I was excited by the potential to clarify issues through grounded theory analysis. My mind was open, my curiosity was piqued, and my primary goal was to conduct a well-designed study that explained hope as it existed for this population.

Participants were selected based on their Z-scores from the quantitative part of the study and subsequent willingness to be interviewed. I was careful to avoid leading questions and deliberately did not mention the core construct of hope on any of the materials or during the first interview, unless a participant made repeated and unsolicited reference to hope. Additionally, I kept a series of handwritten journals and electronic memos in which I recorded logistical or scheduling issues, methodological insights, and my own thoughts, feelings, questions, and concerns as they occurred to me.

Despite considerable differences in age, nationality, ethnicity, and academic attainment between myself and my participants, I conducted the interviews in a friendly, informal manner, and this appeared to facilitate the disclosure of authentic information salient to a study of hope. Having worked with several focus groups and conducted the pilot study with disadvantaged adolescents and young adults in the previous 18 months, I had also had numerous opportunities to expose, reflect upon, and guard against earlier biases.

### *Extended Involvement*

The nature of this study was such that shadowing or otherwise being involved in the participants' lives over an extended period of time was not considered pertinent or practical. Nevertheless, rather than conduct a "one-shot" interview, I engaged all participants (other than the four pilot interviewees who were no longer contactable by the

time I began the main study) in two and occasionally three interviews so that we engaged in intensive sessions totaling between two and four hours. Depending on the availability of the participants, my involvement with them across these interviews ranged from two months (in the case of Helen) to seven months (in the case of Chuck).

### ***“Rich” Data***

All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim in order to capture the participants’ contributions accurately. These transcripts were supplemented with journal notes that recorded my observations and thoughts just before, during, and directly after the interviews.

### ***Member Checking***

I took the opportunity during the second or third interviews not only to gain further clarification of some otherwise ambiguous points made during the first interviews, but also to confirm with the participants that I had accurately interpreted what they had told me at that time.

Additionally, I engaged each of the main study interviewees in “cognitive interviews” concerning what was going through their minds as they responded to the self-report measures, in order to gain clarification of why they responded to various items in the way that they did. This was helpful, particularly when the responses across implementations varied considerably, and I address this issue in further detail in Chapter Six as it offered insight into the challenges of using self-report measures in these contexts.

### ***Triangulation***

As previously discussed, the methods used in this study were influenced by the fact that there are no observable indices such as facial expressions or behaviors that are associated with hope. Additionally, given that this was not conceived as a phenomenological study of hope, I did not want to introduce the complexity surrounding individuals’ personal definitions of hope by asking parents, caregivers, or teachers for their assessments of the participants’ levels of hope. In any event, this would have been



practically challenging, given the nature of this population and many of their familial circumstances.

Nevertheless, triangulation was achieved by gathering evidence for the different levels of hope and social connectedness exhibited by the participants according to the scores from the self-report measures, the written assignments, and the transcribed interviews.

### ***Quasi-Statistics***

Even though this was designed principally as a qualitative study, Maxwell (2005) had articulated the value of using quantitative data to support the findings. Concurrent with qualitatively analyzing the interview transcripts, I engaged in a quantitative analysis of coded extracts pulled from the essays that had been part of the main study's initial data collection stage ( $n=39$ ). This approach had a dual benefit. First, by coding the ways that higher and lower hope participants had expressed shared themes such as education and career goals, references to friends and family, and their personal philosophies on life, I was able to support quantitatively some differences that were important to the qualitative study. For example, I identified that the higher hope group made twice as many references to positive events as negative events, and were more balanced in their references to themselves and others, whereas the lower hope group made 50% more references to negatives than positives, and almost twice as many references to themselves as to others. These findings were confirmed separately by two other persons, one a graduate of the same educational psychology program as myself, and the second an educator not associated with this university. The high degree of agreement between the three analyses helped confirm my interpretation of the data.

### ***Additional Peer Review***

From time to time, I asked various members of my educational psychology cohort to review sections of transcribed data and discuss whether we had arrived at similar or different conclusions. None of these sessions led me to be concerned with my interpretations of the data.

### ***Pattern Matching***

As previously articulated, I did not start out with a completely blank slate with respect to the nature of hope, but was informed by four themes that were addressed by Aquinas' definition of hope and had subsequently appeared (either collectively or individually) in conceptualizations by contemporary psychologists and nursing scholars (e.g., Averill et al., 1991; Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Hinds & Gattuso, 1991; Miller & Powers, 1988). I therefore expected the themes of temporality, "good" outcomes, challenge and adversity, and belief in the possible attainment of their goals to be present in my resulting grounded theory model. That this was indeed the case provides supporting evidence for the "theoretical adequacy" (Ary et al., 2002, p. 453) of the proposed model.

### ***Dependability***

#### ***Audit Trail***

The descriptions offered throughout this dissertation with respect to sampling procedures, the selection process, field site descriptions, methods of data collection, together with my field notes, transcripts, and journals were made available to my dissertation Chair and other committee members on request, represent the audit trail that Ary et al. (2002) describe as "one of the best ways to establish dependability" (p. 455).

#### ***Code-Recoding***

As previously noted, I engaged in numerous, separate periods of coding both during the open coding and axial coding phases, in which I continually compared the various sets for completeness and consistency.

#### ***Replication Logic***

Dependability is additionally determined within qualitative research through conducting a study across multiple locations. My findings were from four separate field sites, including a separate "hold-out" sample, in order to provide evidence not just of dependability but also the generalizability of these data.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS**

There are two sections to this chapter, the format of which responds to the nature of the data. Section One outlines the stories of the four lower hope participants, plus the two participants whose scores on hope and social connectedness changed dramatically across several implementations of these measures. The decision to narrate these stories separately helps to illustrate the differences between the participants in these two groups. Section Two is formatted somewhat differently, in that it draws upon evidence from the stories of one or more of the seven higher hope exemplars to illustrate the five themes that emerged from the grounded theory analysis.

#### **Section One: Lower Hope and Changers**

The participants described in this section represent four from the lower hope group, and two of the “changers” whose scores increased over several administrations of the measures. Their demographic data is presented in Table 4.1 on page 94. Given that there was more variation in the stories told by members of the lower hope group and the “changers,” with respect to their hope and social connectedness, these are presented individually.

**Table 4.1 Demographic Data for Lower Hope and “Changer” Groups**

<b>Name &amp; Key Quote</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Partnership Status</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Graduated on Time?</b>	<b>Father's Education</b>	<b>Religious Views</b>
<b>LYLE</b> “Feeling around the edges in the dark”	M	18	White	Single	0	No (attended different schools due to traveling with father)	High school drop out	Atheist/ agnostic
<b>LORETTA</b> “Things I could've done better”	F	20	Hispanic	Living with partner	1	No (truanting)	Some college	Catholic
<b>LACEY</b> “I just want to be happy with what I have”	F	18	White	Single	0	Yes	Graduate degree	Atheist/ agnostic
<b>LORNE</b> “Somewhere in the middle”	M	20	Hispanic	Single	0	Yes (despite dropping out twice)	High school drop out	Non-denominational
<b>CHANTAL</b> “My favorite things”	F	18	Hispanic	Single	0	No (criminal offense)	High school diploma	Spiritual but not religious
<b>CHUCK</b> “Nobody understands you except for your music”	M	19	White	Single	0	No (truanting)	Unknown	Mormon

***Lower Hope Group***

The lower hope group turned out to be more heterogeneous than I had expected them to be, despite their shared experiences of challenge and uncertainty. Two of them (Lyle and Lacey) had attended the charter high school field site, while the other two (Loretta and Lorne) had attended classes and were being financially supported through the youth services organization. All of them at one stage or another had dropped out of high school, although in Lacey’s case it was only for a day given that she immediately registered herself into the charter high school’s self-paced program. She and Lorne subsequently graduated with their high school diplomas on time. I learned later from the charter school that Lyle had also graduated. On the basis of their fathers’ occupations,

Lyle and Lacey were “middle-class,” while Loretta and Lorne were “working class.” With the exception of Loretta, who had scored average on the measure of social connectedness, the others’ lower hope scores were accompanied by lower scores on that scale. In contrast to the higher hope group, the majority of whom were teen parents, only Loretta had a child in this group as well as being the only one with a live-in partner, the other three being single or dating.

The three sub-groups that I perceived as making up this lower hope foursome were categorized as follows:

Sub-group 1: Lyle and Lacey (lower hope, lower social connectedness): These two participants shared themes of fear and a sense of isolation that appeared to preclude a willingness to embrace change, along with the accompanying goals, planning, and action that would have moved them forward.

Sub-group 2: Loretta (lower hope, average social connectedness): Although higher in social connectedness than other members of the lower hope group, Loretta appeared to experience many forms of negative social influence. Additionally, Loretta articulated unrealistic career goals as well as potentially unfulfilled educational goals.

Sub-group 3: Lorne (lower hope, lower social connectedness): This individual seemed content with a lack of highs or lows in his life, stated a preference for his future to be little different from his past or present, and professed a lack of “thinking” about the future that rendered hope, in his case, unnecessary.

**LYLE (18 year old White male):  
“Feeling around the edges in the dark”**

Lyle seemed to me to be a personable and intelligent young man. Tall, slender, and reasonably attractive I had thought he would have benefited from those physical attributes. The impression I was left with, however, was that he was a very troubled individual. Although he did not go into details about the rift between him and his mother, with whom he had not lived since the age of 13, he recalled “a distinct point in time when I never thought I would speak to her again,” even though she was one of the most “important” and “influential” people in his life. Since his unmarried parents were just 16

years of age when he was born and from what he told me seemed to be more focused on living their own lives than helping him navigate his, I could not help but wonder just how much parenting he had actually received in his young life.

During our discussion, Lyle told me that his mother was the lead singer in a punk rock band and lived in Chicago with her husband, a music producer. He mentioned the name of the band, and I subsequently looked them up on the Internet and found their website. Lyle had described her as “something else, to say the least.” He had last lived in Hawaii with his “brother,” whom he later admitted was his father. Although they shared an apartment together, Lyle made frequent references during our interview to feeling alone in the world.

Interestingly, of all the participants whom I interviewed, Lyle made some of the most frequent, unsolicited uses of the word *hope*, as in “I hope I am, and in a lot of ways I hope I’m not” when talking about how different he imagined himself to be 10 or 15 years into the future. He also referred to hope when mentioning the month-old relationship with his girlfriend.

I hope it’s everything I want it to be. I want to be committed and I know she’s really committed just because of the type of person she is, and I hope I am right about all the things that I said and I talk about. It’s just one of the problems I’ve had in the past, is that you think you know someone and you really don’t know them. But, yeah, we’ll see.

According to Marcel (1951), “We too often use the word hope when what is at issue is in fact [individual] desire” (p. 608). In contrast to a focus on the self, Marcel’s postulation of hope was that it was always socially constituted. Lyle, however, seemed to have largely isolated himself from the world, illustrated by his expressions of trust and fear.

I feel very uncertain about my future. A really big factor in all of that is that when you’re uncertain about things, I think there’s also fears that come with that and [laughs] my biggest fear in life is failure. And it’s really hard to deal with if you’ve lived your life for so long scared...you don’t take risks because you’re scared...you can either do it and not succeed and then I’ll be a failure, or I can

just not do it at all and I won't fail but I won't succeed so I'm just stuck in this vicious cycle of repetitive monotony.

When I asked Lyle to name one of the things he was afraid of, he mentioned moving back in with his mother.

I'm afraid she'll let me down again and I'm afraid she'll...I don't know...I couldn't imagine having to go through something like that again...there's a long background story behind that but, regardless, it's still...it's very hard to be...you want to be one way and you have been one way your entire life...and you know, especially with something like that...it's hard to fathom changing your parent.

Lyle told me that it had been a while since he had had a girlfriend "for numerous reasons," but mainly because he "always ended up getting hurt," and that had "warped" his perception of "how relationships should really be."

Like instances where you don't know how to react or communicate the right way...and it's hard to tell if this is going to work so you're always, always approaching it real apprehensive and you don't want to...I don't know. It's like feeling around the edges in the dark.

Currently working as a host at a mid-range restaurant, Lyle told me he had "much higher aspirations" for himself concerning "music." Despite this being a very important goal, "I love it to death. And it's in my blood...literally, I mean," when I asked him what he wanted to do specifically Lyle responded by telling me that that high school was holding him back. I then asked why a lack of educational qualifications would prevent him from moving forward with this particular goal and he replied, "It's not holding me back, but I feel like it is." Interested in exploring what Lyle typically did when faced with a major obstacle to his goals, in relation to Aquinas' hope themes of difficulty and possibility, I asked him what his options were concerning achieving his high school diploma in as short a time as possible. His response was, "It's hard for me to think of any real possible solutions."

Elizabeth: Who could you talk to about this? Have you discussed this with anybody that might be able to help?

Lyle: I've always found that I'm my best adviser. I know that's not true because I know it really helps to talk to people about things. I'm sure there's a lot of people in my life that would be more than willing to give me their support but I don't feel like I have anybody. For the longest time I've felt like I've been on my own in many ways. I don't have a lot of friends and I think that when people look at me they expect otherwise.

Elizabeth: What if there was someone who could say "Okay, here's a plan and this will work and all you have to do is put in the time and effort." Would you do it?

Lyle: I certainly think I would. I think in a way that's how (the school) approaches things. They like to make you think they have a plan for you and if you do this and this and they give you the utensils necessary to do it you should be able to achieve it no problem. But it's not true. And I feel like I don't want anybody to do anything for me. I never have, I never will, I want to make it on my own.

Elizabeth: Do you consider people giving you advice or maybe helping you make connections...do you consider that not doing it on your own?

Lyle: I think in a roundabout way I would (think that) because I don't take anyone's help and it's really...it's unbeknownst to me because I don't know, I don't know why. It's almost like I feel bad and I don't see much logic behind it.

Elizabeth: Much logic behind what?

Lyle: I mean, I've helped people numerous times in many situations. But it's just taking someone else's help, I feel bad, I don't think, like, it's right. I almost feel like I'm in their debt. I've always felt like I need to do things on my own and even then I haven't been...there have been times when I haven't been very motivated to do so.

In terms of how he used his imagination to think ahead about the future, Lyle admitted to "over-thinking" and "over-analyzing." For example, he likened life to a "game of chess," where "you need to think ten or twenty moves ahead."

Every move is a sacrifice and every sacrifice that you make you can gain back eventually in some way or another, but when you're playing chess every move is crucial and could determine the outcome of the game.

With such a view, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Lyle's "game" of losses and gains was unlikely to do more than keep him rooted to the same spot. Indeed, toward the end of our interview, I asked Lyle to imagine a future in which he was doing something he enjoyed and to describe to me what that looked like. He responded that it



looked “like a Picasso picture,” and went on to say that “it’s hard to imagine that you can have anything you want and you can be anything you want. I know it’s true for the most part but when you have fears like I have it still makes it hard to do anything of consequence.”

In terms of the four themes of hope inspired by Aquinas’ conceptualization, it appeared that although Lyle was able to articulate a future goal that was personally important or “good” in his eyes, albeit one lacking in specificity, his fears outweighed his hopes for successfully moving through the challenges associated with his aspirations. Thus, Lyle seemed to be trapped by the frustrations of the present because of unresolved relationship issues from the past.

**LACEY (18 year old White female):**  
**“I just want to be happy with what I have”**

I introduced Lacey’s story at the opening of this dissertation by contrasting her fears and apparent lack of social support with that of Helen, a higher hoper. Like Lyle, Lacey appeared to be frozen in the present, unable to move forward with her educational and career goals that were similarly lacking in much specificity. She was a small, slender young woman with a pretty face and short, straight hairstyle that was currently sported by celebrities such as Victoria Beckham (“Posh Spice”) and Rihanna.

Although Lacey talked about being “passionate” about certain interests, particularly gay rights and legalizing gay marriage, she seemed to me to lack the drive and energy I have always associated with passion. Talking with Lacey was not easy. Articulate in parts of our conversations, she was nevertheless frequently monosyllabic and said “I guess,” or “I don’t know” a lot in response to many of my questions. Indeed, the trailing off of thoughts and constant need for prompting to “please tell me more about that,” was a feature of my interviews with three of the lower hope participants: Lacey, Loretta, and Lorne.

Our first interview took place in a private room at the charter high school where Lacey was completing credits for her High School Diploma. By the time of our second interview three months later, she had graduated and was waiting to start classes at the

local community college. This gave me an opportunity to compare the educational goals and planning Lacey had articulated when we first met in April, with the decisions she was now making in July.

When we first talked, Lacey had expressed an interest in wildlife conservation and said she had been accepted at a college in Maine that offered courses in that field. In the essay she had written when completing the first round of instruments for me in March, Lacey referred to being “at this strange transition point,” and that she was “not sure I can make it in the real world.” In response to that challenge, Lacey had decided to defer moving to Maine for a year.

Elizabeth: What was the reason for that decision?

Lacey: I don't know. Just considering that I did not go to a public high school...it's a big transition already, but coming from a charter school it's even more of a transition. I think I figured I wasn't ready. Oh, I don't know. I wasn't ready to move, that's a big thing.

Elizabeth: Do you have any plans as to what you would do with that degree specifically, once you graduated from college?

Lacey: I'm not really sure yet. I suppose working in a sanctuary. Uh, I guess trapping and releasing and tagging animals for...<trails off>.

By the time we spoke in July, at our second interview, Lacey told me she was “a lot less certain about what I want as far as the college thing goes” and that while she was still planning to attend the local community college, there were doubts in her mind as to whether or not she would take up her place at Maine. When I asked her about specific goals and plans she told me, “I'm not really sure yet. But I mean, I guess I'll just see. I'll cross that bridge when I get there.” Not being sure “what I want right now” was a recurring theme throughout the second interview with Lacey. In terms of pursuing a career in wildlife conservation, she said she would “still like to do that,” but “I also realize that while I'm at (the local community college) I'm probably going to still experience other things there and I don't want to limit myself.” This, of course, is not an unreasonable approach for a college freshman.

When I asked Lacey whether her thoughts were mostly in the past, present, or the future, she responded with “the present,” adding, “I mean, you shouldn't dwell on the

past and you shouldn't focus everything on the future because it's probably not going to turn out the way you think it is." This echoed what she had told me during our first interview, when I asked her if she ever thought about what her life might be like in five or ten years' time.

Lacey: Not really. I just... whatever happens I just want it to be... I just want to be happy with what I have. I don't necessarily have some ideal situation I want to be in. I try not to think a lot about the future because I know that about 99 per cent of people don't end up where they think they're going to be, and I think it's kind of pointless to imagine what it's going to be like when it's probably not going to turn out that way.

Elizabeth: How much control do you feel over how your life develops?

Lacey: I feel like I have the ability to control it sometimes. I feel like I have trouble knowing how to do it, though. I know that sounds really strange.

Elizabeth: Can you explain that to me a little more?

Lacey: I don't know. Sometimes I feel, like, I mean I know that most of the things that happen to me I can control. But sometimes I feel like I don't know how to go about doing that.

Elizabeth: Do you have a specific example of something like that?

Lacey: I can't think of any specific examples.

Elizabeth: So would you say that things generally turn out the way you want them to?

Lacey: This is going to sound really cynical, but I try not to have any expectations of... you know, that things will turn out okay because that way you can end up really disappointed that things don't go exactly how you planned them to be. I do what I can to have things turn out the way I want them to, but I don't really worry about it because I know that either things will fall into place or they won't.

It seemed, therefore, that Lacey's response to challenge and potential adversity was one of avoidance. Continually delaying her decision to move away to college and to "cross that bridge when I get there" suggested a lack of trust in herself, in life, or both. As Erikson (1958) articulated, the development of hope occurs through early childhood experiences in which an individual learns from the optimal balance of trust and mistrust experiences that they can expect, in the main, for their trust to be well-grounded. Lacey did not talk much about her parents, only that she did not really get on with them. Her father, a lawyer, had never been very "touchy feely," and although a "good guy," Lacey had never felt she could go to him to discuss her problems. She told me that her mother, a

CPA, had pushed her into to going to Art School, even though her personal inclination was toward science and that “art was always just a hobby but she (her mother) never understood that.”

Our second interview took place at Lacey’s apartment, an issue that she had referred to in her essay as both “exciting and terrifying.” Previously she had mentioned her fears around moving away and living by herself because “I’ve lived in the same house all my whole life and so I don’t deal very well with change.” With respect to explaining what she meant by not being sure she could “make it in the real world,” Lacey said that “I am always scared that I’m not going to be able to do things right,” and that her “whole school experience” involved falling back the moment she had reached “where I’m supposed to be.” The way she appeared to deal with her fears was to “try not to think about it, because I know that if I start then I won’t stop.” This suggested an inability to self-regulate negative or unpleasant thoughts and feelings, in contrast with the willingness of the higher hope group to face challenges head-on. Similar to Lorne, to be introduced shortly, Lacey’s avoidance strategies included not thinking about any of the deeper issues, in particular any sense of meaning or purpose for her life.

Elizabeth: What’s your take on questions like “why are we here?”

Lacey: I don’t really know and I’m okay with that. I don’t think anybody knows and I think it’s pointless to try and figure it out.

In addition to scoring lower on the measure of hope, Lacey had also scored lower on social connectedness and without revealing the purpose of that measure, I asked Lacey about some of her responses to the items on that scale. In particular, I asked her to talk to me about the apparent disconnect between seeing herself as a “loner,” while “being actively involved in people’s lives.”

Lacey: I am actively involved in people’s lives but I’ve never really felt like I relate to people very well. That’s just the kind of way I’ve always felt. It’s hard for me to trust somebody but I guess I’ll trust somebody when they show vulnerability, as strange as that sounds.

Elizabeth: No, I can understand that. Is that something you relate to?

Lacey: When you trust somebody, you put yourself in a vulnerable position so that it's showing that they trust me, I guess.

Although Snyder's hope theory (Snyder, 1994, 2002; Snyder et al., 1991) emphasized the cognitive aspects of hope, others have clearly categorized hope as an emotion (Averill et al., 1990; Bruininks & Malle, 2005). Lacey left me with the impression of someone who is apathetic in the sense of the original Greek meaning of the word, i.e., *a + pathos* or "without emotion." This raises an interesting, hitherto unexpected potential difference between higher and lower hope. As I explain later, many of the higher hope participants had discovered that taking action ameliorated their feelings of stress or discomfort. This, however, was an adaptive strategy that Lacey had either not learned or was choosing not to engage. As such, Lacey's approach of deferring important educational and career-related decisions, while remaining focused on the present so as not to feel disappointed in an uncertain future, appeared maladaptive in the sense of preventing her from learning how to transcend negative events, a strategy that has long been associated with hope.

**LORNE (20 year old Hispanic male):  
"Somewhere in the middle"**

I remembered Lorne even before I contacted him to be interviewed. He had sat on the front row during the group administration of the surveys and smiled as if to show he was paying attention to my verbal instructions, even though many of his cohort were goofing off. In his essay he referred to himself as "a pretty easy person to get along with, very respectful," and I certainly found that to be the case. We met at his apartment for both of our interviews and he insisted on collecting me from the parking lot so that I would not have to try and find my own way through the complex. He was a fairly average individual all round, a little taller than myself (at 5' 5"), with no distinguishable features; the sort of individual whom it would be hard to describe with any great certainty to someone else.

As with Lacey, many of Lorne's responses began with "I don't know," or "I guess," and the resulting typed transcripts largely comprised of single sentences,

indicating that he rarely spoke for more than three or four sentences at a time. Whenever I asked if he could provide an example to illustrate or explain an issue in our discussion, he told me “I can’t really think of anything.” At one point he said, “I just live, I guess. I don’t think about anything.” The impression I was left with, was that Lorne did not have aspirations beyond having a job that he liked.

Lorne was studying to be an X-ray technician. He told me that he had been inspired to pursue this line of work after talking with a young man who had taken his X rays in the aftermath of surgery, when Lorne had broken several limbs due to skateboarding accidents.

Lorne: He was pretty young and I saw myself doing that too.

Elizabeth: What was it specifically about that job that interested you?

Lorne: I don’t know. He told me he liked it, and he would tell me about his life.

I’d talk to him and he’d tell me that the pay was pretty good. He was young and he was already getting up. He was already looking for a house for him and his girlfriend, so I’d picture myself being able to do that as well. I guess I saw my life based around everything about being an X-ray tech.

Unlike the other members of the lower hope group, Lorne had both a clear goal for a career that he expected to do “I think for the rest of my life,” and was taking the action necessary to reach it, although he never mentioned any alternative plan, should anything not work out. He told me that after passing all his current exams he would get a temporary license for two years, at which point he would have to complete a 600-hours internship and pass the State Board exam before receiving his final license. He had found out about the youth services program that was funding most of his schooling through a cousin who was also getting financial help through them. Although Lorne’s scores on the hope scale were consistently lower across both administrations, his level of social connectedness was only just below average. What differentiated him most from his lower hope peers was the tendency to look at others’ lives and successes and believe he could achieve something similar, a theme common to the higher hope group. Nevertheless, Lorne seemed content to accept a continuance of the present rather than be inspired by visions of a very different future.

Elizabeth: Do your thoughts tend to be in the past, the present, or the future?  
Lorne: Just in the present, I guess. I don't really think about the past or the future.  
But I don't really think about anything that much.  
Elizabeth: So you take every day as it comes?  
Lorne: Yeah. I've been real busy at work. I do like 11 hour, 12 hour shifts every day, so I don't think a lot of anything.  
Elizabeth: Aside from becoming an X-ray technician, how do you see your life being different in the future?  
Lorne: Just more stable.  
Elizabeth: Do you ever imagine what kind of house you might be living in, or what your partner might be like, or something like that?  
Lorne: Not really. No.  
Elizabeth: How much control do you think you have over how your life develops?  
Lorne: I don't know.  
Elizabeth: Well, when you think of success, does it have more to do with effort or is it all down to luck, in your view?  
Lorne: I don't really think about it, but it could be both. If you work hard you could do whatever you want and some people are lucky and some are just not lucky.  
Elizabeth: How do you see yourself?  
Lorne: In the middle, I guess.

Our interviews continued in a similar vein. Lorne said he did not know what was important to him in life, whether we are here for a purpose, or if life held any particular meaning. He did not think about what his life might be like in five or ten years' time and said the furthest ahead he thought was "a few months." When asked what the next few months might hold for him he responded, "I don't know. I guess. I'm not sure."

In preparing the questions for these semi-structured interviews, I realized that many of them would require a high degree of self-reflexivity. I wondered whether an additional, potentially differentiating factor between the higher hope and lower hope groups might be the ease with which the participants responded to such questions, together with their ability to offer supporting examples. With the exception of Lyle, who demonstrated a considerable degree of forethought concerning his exposition about the differences between the "unhealthy fear" that was holding him back from taking risks in life and what he termed "healthy fear," the inability or decision not to engage in much reflexive thinking earmarked the lower hope interviewees, particularly Lacey and Lorne.

Given Lorne's expectation that everything would remain much the same, and that his past, present, and future would only be slightly distinguished by the greater "stability" he anticipated as he firmed up his career plans, it is perhaps not surprising that he scored so lower on hope. As was evident from speaking with the higher hope group, hope is salient when a person articulates the desire for a better future than they are experiencing in the present, has decided that such a change is important to them, and is willing to face considerable challenge in pursuit of associated goals. Because Lorne had no desired future that was radically different to what he was experiencing in the present time, hope of the kind that I intended to explore in this study did not seem relevant.

**LORETTA (20 year old Hispanic female):  
"Things I could have done better"**

Loretta was the only one of my lower hope interviewees with a child. We met at her apartment where her four month-old son either played in a swing chair or was held by me during our interview. Unlike the conversations with Lyle, Lacey, and Lorne, I did not feel particularly comfortable in her presence. She was a tall, overweight young woman with what I can only describe as "hard" features. Overall she seemed rather "rough" to me. I knew she had a criminal record of violence so I was concerned about not antagonizing her in any way. Most of all, I had the sense that there was something inauthentic about parts of our interview, an issue to which I shall return shortly.

Loretta had led an itinerant childhood. She and her mother, a lobby cleaner, had "hopped, like, from hotel to hotel" during the weekdays, with Loretta staying with her paternal grandmother at weekends until she was 13. After that she moved in with various family members, including her father, listing seven changes in living arrangements before moving into her own apartment with her girlfriend two years earlier.

Like Lyle, Loretta was still trying to complete her high school education, in her case with a GED earned through a youth services organization. She told me she had frequently truanted throughout high school.

Loretta: Well, when I first started high school I wasn't doing too good. I was skipping school with my friends, you know, out doing what I wanted to do



and then basically...I would go to school and then like basically my friends we'd all be, like, "Hey let's go skip, let's go do this." So yeah, that wasn't really a good thing when I first started high school.

Elizabeth: What was it that made that more attractive for you than actually staying in school and getting your education?

Loretta: Just going out and being with friends. Yeah, I mean it's, like, hey, my friends are doing it, why can't I go do it? Yeah.

By the time she was 16, Loretta had dropped out altogether but then registered at 17 at the same charter school that Lacey and Lyle attended. She was there for a year before being arrested for fighting with her stepmother, "and that's when I stopped going to that school and had to work. That's why I want to go and get my GED and start all over again."

This decision appeared to receive little support from her father who was the only parent to have completed a high school education. He had frequently told Loretta "he did not think I was going to get anything done, I was never going to graduate, I was never basically (going to) become anything in life." Indeed, it appeared that the underlying reason why Loretta wanted to get her GED was to prove her father wrong.

I want to prove him wrong. I really do want to prove him wrong and that, that's my main goal, that's why I want to finish school and do all this other stuff so I can tell him, I told you so, I was going to do it and I did it...so, yeah.

Despite measuring lower on the hope instrument, Loretta scored average on social connectedness, and this was confirmed by frequent references to her girlfriend as her "main support," and also various friends and family members including her mother, who would call everyday to find out how the child was doing and give her help and advice. A female cousin who had earned her GED through the same youth services organization had told Loretta about that program, which was how she came to attend classes there.

In contrast to Lyle, Lacey, and Lorne who were rooted in the present, Loretta appeared to be more influenced by the past. Indeed, one of the few courses she enjoyed in school was history, "I guess because of the things you get to know like things that happened in the past." In her own life, however, this focus on the past appeared to be keeping Loretta in a mode of wishing rather than hoping. Indeed, the following exchange

illustrated the difference between the future-focused wishing that Lynch (1965) had associated with hope's imaginative quality, and wishing that is rooted in past regrets.

Loretta: I look at it now and I wish that I did not mess up when I was in high school. I wish that I had went to school, went to those pep rallies, went to, you know, the prom, do all of that stuff...because you know it only comes around once. So, I wish, I really do wish that I did not have...you know, did not mess up and did not do all that because I really do want to experience that.

Elizabeth: So what do you think occupies your thoughts more, the present, the past, or the future?

Loretta: I think about the past more often. Because I think about the things that I could have done to better myself for the situation that I'm in now. I mean, I'm doing good now, I'm doing fine but I could be doing better. You know, I could have graduated. I could have gone to work and you know, even if I had my son or I did not, I wanted to get a good job and do all that stuff and I wanted to have a good job by now. That's why I think about the past a lot because that's...the past is what makes your future.

With respect to the future, Loretta articulated the desire to pursue what I would argue was an unrealistic career goal, given her work experience to date. Her previous jobs had consisted of bagging groceries at a food store, being an assistant manager at a fast food restaurant, and working in a cafeteria. She had still to earn even a GED, and she had a criminal record for fighting with her stepmother. Nevertheless, when I asked Loretta what she thought she might do career-wise once her son was in school, she said she had always wanted to become a lawyer and was "pretty sure I can do it if I put myself to it."

Elizabeth: Do you know anybody that does the law?

Loretta: No I don't. That's why I want to, like, get out there and talk to people or people can refer me to somebody and you, like, you know, hey this person wants to...go into this field. Whatever...whatever.

Elizabeth: How might you go about doing that? What kinds of things would you do to make that happen?

Loretta: Um, just talk round to people, like my dad. We don't get along but he has more connections than, you know, anything so...I mean, I really don't want to for the simple fact that I want to try and do it on my own but I mean if it comes down to it and I can't find, you know, do it on my own, then I will go ask him and be like, you know, "Hey can you help me try to

find somebody who's a lawyer or something so I can go to their office, learn what they do?" and stuff like that.

Elizabeth: What does your dad do?

Loretta: He works for the city, in solid waste.

Loretta's average level of social connectedness seemed to be providing her with a means, principally through help-seeking and information gathering, by which she might move forward with her career goals, as had appeared to be the case with pursuing her GED. However, she did not appear to recognize the disconnect between her current educational abilities and what would be required of her in order to become a lawyer. In that sense, therefore, her level of social connectedness seemed to be setting her up for failure, potentially confirming her father's low opinion of her future prospects.

With respect to the aspirations she had for her son, these tended to be couched largely in terms of avoidance.

Elizabeth: What do you think about when you think about his future?

Loretta: I want it to be good. I don't want him to be like me and, you know, listen to what my friends said, do this, and you know copy what my friends are doing. I don't want him to do that....I don't want him to be like me and you know have kids...I'm not saying that I regret him because he's my world, but I want him to go to school, finish up, do what he wants to do in his life and then possibly think about having kids or getting married.

Elizabeth: So what might you say to him when that conversation comes around?

Loretta: Honestly, I think I'd be blunt with him and let him know I did not do it at this time, I did not graduate, I was, you know, following my friends and I don't want you to be that way. I want you to finish up so you can have more things in life.

Toward the end of our interview, I was left wondering just how successful Loretta was going to be in setting a good example for her son by achieving her GED. She admitted that in the past month she had gone to class "not very many" times because her son had gotten sick, then she had gotten sick, and then the weather was cold and rainy and she did not want to take him out and "take that chance of him catching something else and me having, you know, not to go to school." There were also issues with childcare because Loretta did not trust leaving him in daycare "because things could go

wrong and stuff like that.” Indeed, the only fear that Loretta expressed was “losing my son,” that I interpreted to mean him dying rather than being taken away from her.

At the close of our interview, Loretta asked me something that I thought at the time was unusual, because none of the other lower hope group had indicated any interest in the real purpose of my study or had asked me questions. Before leaving, when I asked if there was anything she wanted to know from me, Loretta was interested to find out “when you’re done doing the research and stuff do you like interview other people and compare the difference...or, how do you do that?” I realized later that this was an ambiguous question, one that could be interpreted several ways. For example, Loretta could have been asking me if I was going to compare her interview responses with other young people. At the time, however, I took this to be a question about whether or not I would be checking what she had told me with other people that knew her. Having explained before I began the interview how the study was structured, I therefore responded that I was only interviewing the participants and would not be contacting any of her friends or family. Loretta seemed content with that answer, although I might have misunderstood her question and perhaps she did not feel comfortable pointing that out. As an overall impression, however, I left the interview feeling that Loretta might have been giving me socially desirable answers, particularly in relation to her career goal of becoming a lawyer. Since I had described my study as being focused on the education and career goals of young adults, and Loretta knew that I was aware that she had still to earn her GED, I wondered whether her telling me that she wanted to become a lawyer was to impress me rather than convey what she truthfully wanted to do in life. My conclusion from this interview that lower hope goals are often unrealistic, however, was supported in the literature given the emphasis on hope in relation to realistic assessments of one’s current circumstances and future goals (Penrod & Morse, 1997).

### *The “Changers”*

At the beginning of my study I had intended to have equal sized groups of higher and lower hope individuals in order to compare and contrast their perspectives on various aspects associated in the hope literature. What I had failed to appreciate at that point was

that hope is a process, not just an outcome, and could in some cases be influenced upwards or downwards by prevailing circumstances. This realization came to me while I was interviewing Chantal, one of the two “hope changers” that I introduce in this section. Our conversation, in which she talked animatedly about having found a career goal she was really excited about, and her plans for running her own business in the future, seemed at odds with her lower hope scores barely a month earlier. When I re-administered the hope scale, her new score had moved her out of the lower hope group into average hope. By the time of our second interview two months later, her score on the third implementation of the hope measure had reached the mean for the whole sample. Her social connectedness score remained within the boundaries of the average group across two administrations, but had also increased slightly by the second time we spoke. It was because of this experience with Chantal that I began administering the hope and social connectedness scales to all interview participants, prior to beginning our conversations.

Chuck was originally included in the lower hope group because, although his hope score had been average at the first implementation of that measure, his social connectedness was very low and I was interested in exploring that relationship. By the time I conducted the first interview, six weeks later, Chuck’s hope score was much the same but his social connectedness score had increased 15 points, moving him into the average range. I lost track of Chuck over the summer months, finally contacting him in the fall semester when I interviewed him for the second time. He seemed a very different individual, and this was reflected in large increases in hope and social connectedness that had moved him into the higher hope group on both measures.

I include Chantal and Chuck’s stories here in order to illustrate the association between hope and change, a theme that was particularly prevalent amongst the higher hope group. In Chantal’s case, it was her external situation that had changed dramatically, while with Chuck the changes were more internally driven, possibly maturational.

**CHANTAL (18 year old Hispanic female):**  
**“My favorite things”**

The essay that Chantal wrote during the first implementation of the measures spoke of the uncertainty and worry she was facing about her impending court case. She had been charged with having an unlawful weapon on school premises, a gun belonging to her father that was “for my protection and my boyfriend’s protection,” and she had been put in jail for a week prior to being let out on bail. That experience had been a salutary one for Chantal who had determined, “I never want to get in trouble again.” The case had been hanging over her for about a year but had been resolved one week before our first interview, when Chantal was finally sentenced to probation for two years and 150 hours of community service. Her parents had paid out \$5,000 in lawyer’s fees, and their stable home life, as well as the character references heard by the court from teachers and friends of the family, had persuaded the judge that this was a blip on Chantal’s otherwise spotless record. Indeed, she seemed to me to be an unlikely kind of person to get into that sort of trouble. Quiet, polite, and well-spoken, always with tidy hair and wearing nice clothes, Chantal had always answered my emails promptly and kept our engagements as originally planned which was unusual, especially among the lower hope participants.

The other big change for Chantal that emerged from our first interview was that she had discovered “what I want to do and what goals I want that I’m satisfied with...like, that’s never really happened for, like, ever.” She described knowing what she now wanted to achieve as “getting fully control of my life.” This transformation had come about while taking an entrepreneurship class at the charter school, for which the teacher had encouraged her to write a paper about her favorite things. In Chantal’s case this meant hair, tattooing, and body piercing, and she came up with the idea of owning a store that offered all three of those services. The teacher even took her to a meeting of local businesspeople, where their stories and struggles helped Chantal form a connection between her education and future plans.

Chantal: I’d probably take extra classes (at college) just to have the knowledge and make sure that if something else were to happen...if I wanted to

export or import or whatever...I would want to know for myself and not have someone else do it. Or I could have someone else do it but I'd want to know also what they're doing. Then after I'm done with all my learning I'm probably going to, like, slowly start my business. I mean, I know people in cosmetology schools that I could hire.

Elizabeth: At what age do you see yourself doing that?

Chantal: It's really hard to say but I'm hoping at least before I'm 25 to be done with all the schoolwork and maybe get close enough to starting the business. I mean, I'm hoping that I can do this as quickly as possible but I don't want it to go so quickly that I might miss something...like I want to make sure I know it and everything before I move on.

Chantal already had a back-up plan to "work for the State," as her parents did, should the challenge of starting up a new business prove to be insurmountable. Nevertheless, it was apparent that opening a store that allowed her to engage with her "favorite things" was an important goal for Chantal. Even when she had not known specifically what she wanted to do as a career, "I did not want to live my life without at least a GED or High School Diploma because then I wouldn't get any type of job, later on in my life, that I would even be close to liking." The theme of having intrinsically satisfying work, representing long-held interests is one that is woven repeatedly through the stories of the higher hope group.

By the time of our second interview, conducted at her family's home during the summer, Chantal was testing out her entrepreneurial expertise as a sales representative selling a range of cutlery to people in their homes and operating from referrals.

Chantal: Well, I saw a lot of my family first, like I first did my mom and dad and then they referred me to more family so it's just a whole of bunch of family for now. But it's getting to where they are just acquaintances and...there are a couple of people I saw who I did not even know at all.

Elizabeth: What kind of experience are you getting from this that might help with your store idea?

Chantal: Communication skills, probably. Because I'm going to have customers and you're going to have to talk to and figure out what they like or what they want. And I think that's what also helps me because I sometimes get shy with people I really, really don't know and I do have to do, like, a presentation for them. Other than that, I think also the business experience of doing math. I'm horrible at it, but I'm getting a little bit better <laughs>

like figuring out how to do calculations and all this other stuff. And so I'm learning a little bit each time I do my job.

It became obvious how influential Chantal's mother was, both directly and indirectly, with respect to preparing their daughter for the world of work in a way that appeared to be missing for the lower hope group. Chantal's mother, who had taken early retirement from her State job and was now selling luxury goods through a "party plan" system, "calls a lot of her friends" to help Chantal get referrals, would drive her daughter to each appointment, and appeared to be a positive role model: "She's a sales rep just like me and she knows how it works and stuff like that." The combination of average social connectedness in combination with a realistic, albeit challenging, hoped-for career goal seemed to me to promote even higher hope as Chantal derived incremental successes from the experiences she was having.

In terms of her average level of hope, Chantal exemplified themes that were common to the lower hope, and some that were typical of the higher hope group. For example, when I asked her to describe a time when she felt hopeful, Chantal's response appeared to focus on avoiding the negative, as in "hoping that nothing goes wrong" to prevent her attaining her career goals, "I was just hoping I wouldn't go to jail," and (in reference to being in jail) "I was just hoping that nobody would beat me up." When pressed to explain this a little further, Chantal began to sound a little like Lorne.

Just hoping that everything stays steady. That's pretty much how I see hope as in making sure I can...that I still have it in my mind that I still want to get somewhere or get something, that I still want something. And if it's something that I can't really take too much action in, like me and my boyfriend staying together because I don't have as much time to spend with him as I used to, it's just hoping that things stay the way they are.

Yet, later in our conversation when she described what it was like being in jail for a week, during which time "there wasn't really much to hope for because you're stuck in and you really don't do anything much," Chantal articulated that she had never lost hope.



Because everybody's hoping for something, either negative or positive. And it's positive whenever I'm really upset. Or something really gets me down and I'm just hoping that I get over it. That things are going to move on.

Chantal also touched upon some of the socially-derived values that were a recurring theme throughout the stories told by the higher hope group, such as self-reliance, and responsibility.

My mom's trying to get back into work but she's not trying to have her friends, like, pull strings. She wants to see if she still has what she used to have, like, if she could write up her application exactly as she used to and get the job on her own. But she knows people who can tell her when there are job openings or not, even when they're telling people outside of the job that there's openings, so they can go in there and try to apply or something.

I think it's nice that some people will just tell you about it and say, "Hey, you should apply here because they're hiring." But I don't think that people should just hand them the job right away and not give a full chance to someone who's maybe a little bit better or has more experience.

I learned from her (older sister's) mistakes. She's in debt and has a lot of kids and it doesn't help her. And just barely now at her age (34) she's finally getting out of all that mess and finding a better job that pays her well and stuff. And so I see her mistakes and I don't want to end up with kids because I see the kids she's had <laughs> and I don't want to get financially in debt and stuff...and relationship-wise for her it has not been easy.

Nevertheless, Chantal's average level of hope and social connectedness did not appear to dispose her to help others or articulate any deep sense of meaning and purpose in her life, themes that, as will be evidenced shortly, differentiated members of the higher hope and higher social connectedness group.

**CHUCK (19 year old White male):**  
**"Nobody understands you except for your music"**

The key focus of Chuck's story was the change that took place between our first interview in April and the second one in October six months later, and what it reveals about the potential maturational aspect of hope together with the flexibility inherent in attaining hoped-for goals.

Like all of the participants described so far, Chuck's experience in high school had not been a positive one. He was verbally and physically bullied and rejected by his peers because of his baggy, multi-zippered clothes, choice of music, and his resemblance to the comedian Drew Carey. He had fine, sandy-colored hair that poked out from under a baseball cap that he habitually wore backwards, sported round metal-rimmed glasses, and was overweight. As a consequence of the bullying, Chuck had dropped out of high school twice and only registered at the charter school as a way to "try and go around the system" and become accepted back into mainstream schooling. However, once he was enrolled in the charter school Chuck found that he liked it, so he stayed on. Chuck's intention, stated at our first interview, was to have graduated by the end of the year, but by our second interview it seemed that this was more likely to happen in the spring of 2008. Both of our interviews took place in a private room at the charter high school.

If there was one thing that Chuck referred to constantly it was "his music." Everything we discussed was brought back to that topic, and he illustrated his thoughts and feelings on life by quoting lyrics from some of his favorite heavy metal and "Christian rock" bands.

My music is my number one thing that keeps me firm...from failing in life. Because when I listen to my music I just release all the anger and the pain away and I just focus on one thing. Basically, however I feel at that time I'll write lyrics on how I feel. It will come out good or it will come out bad or whatever it does...the way I write is the way I feel at that time. It's something I love. It's my music. My family even knows that when I'm listening to my music they don't really hardly talk to me because they know that's my time, and I just sit there and think of what's happened in the day or what's happened with the week. Then my music is the only thing that helps me out. Nobody understands you except for your music.

Not surprisingly, Chuck expressed a desire to work in the music industry, fronting his own band and to be "my own boss at music." As a fall-back plan, he said he would work in a music store where he could be surrounded by like-minded individuals who dressed as he did. When I asked Chuck how certain he was that his life would turn out the way he wanted, he responded "110 per cent" and proceeded to explain why he felt so

confident. The youngest of five children, all of his siblings had either done drugs or been to jail for drug-related offences and having seen the mistakes that they had made, he had made a deliberate choice to stay away from that side of life, much as Chantal had done with her older sister who had had five children.

I've not done drugs. I've never been to jail. I've never followed my brothers and sisters' footsteps and I'm my own self and I don't let nobody tell me what to do and when to do it and how to do it. That's how I know I'm 100 per cent sure that I'm going to make it in this world.

Despite Chuck's unrelenting confidence and, at times, tendency to sound like a motivational speaker in repeatedly stressing "never give up on your dream," and "if you don't keep moving forward you're going to be pushed back," I suspected that he had a history of child abuse that might help explain his constant assertion that "it's people who give up on people." At our first meeting he told me that he had found a child in the parking lot while collecting the carts for his store job and that, by helping re-unite the boy with his parents he had averted the child getting raped, which I thought at the time seemed overly-dramatic. When our later conversation drifted briefly into religion, Chuck questioned why God allowed little kids to get abducted, raped, or killed. One of Chuck's role models, he told me, was a hard rock singer about whom he said:

It's proven that he's been molested. He was brought up in the world with all that pain and he never said nothing to his mom and when he told his mom she wouldn't believe him so he had no security there. So he went out there to find a way to escape from it all. And what he had was music...he went out and did music.

I surmised that having had a similar experience, particularly since he told me that one of his brothers had been by abused by their father, might account for Chuck's lower level of social connectedness. Given that Chuck's hope score lay at the cut-off point between the average and lower groups, I was not surprised to find commonalities between him and members of the lower hope group, especially Lacey, with respect to shared views about the future.

Elizabeth: Do you ever imagine what your life might be like in five year's time or something like that?

Chuck: Not really. I think about the present and now because if I think about the future...it's all a dream basically. While if I focus on the here and now I'm basically saying, you know what, this is what I gotta do right now not what can I do to make this future better. If I'm not worried about the present and I'm worried about the future then I can mess up the present and not have a future.

Elizabeth: When you described the future as a dream...what did you mean by that?

Chuck: Nothing is ever exactly what you want it to be. There's something that holds you back or changes in your life so you can't honestly say, "This is how my future is going to be," because you don't know what's going to happen five seconds from now, five minutes from now. You can walk down the street and get shot, you can get hit by a car, lose a leg or something. You honestly don't know. So you can't think of the future, but if you think of the here and now you can stop something happening before it happens. But if you think about the future...it's just the future.

By the end of our first interview I was left with the impression of a young man who was trying to make sense of a possibly abusive childhood by focusing all of his energies on the one thing he knew would never let him down or "give up" on him, his music.

When Chuck and I met for the second interview and he had completed the instruments for the third time I noted a 41 point increase in his social connectedness score from the first implementation that had taken place seven months earlier. That increase represented a shift of almost three standard deviations. He told me that his goal for the new semester had been to make friends and that he had been successful. I asked how he had accomplished that goal.

Chuck: Like, last year I was always trying to make friends...do anything I had to do just to make friends. And this year I'm, like, sit back, listen, and hear what they're saying. And that's what I'm trying to do.

Elizabeth: So, taking a different strategy for making friends?

Chuck: Exactly.

Elizabeth: Why did you decide to do it differently this year?

Chuck: Because I found out what I was doing was not working too well. A lot of people were beginning to hate me more than be my friends.

Elizabeth: Why do you think that was?

Chuck: Because I was doing anything I can...talking just to talk and just thinking that they would care about what I was saying and not a lot of people did. It turns out that if I'm trying to do one thing and see that it's not working I basically stop right there and find another way.

In that respect, Chuck had illustrated how learning from past mistakes had enabled him to become more effective at making friends in the present, thereby demonstrating some of the temporal connectedness that was evident among the higher hope group, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

The changes in Chuck's responses to the social connectedness scale were so dramatic in terms of now feeling less disconnected with the world or like an outsider, to having a greater sense of sense of belonging, and feeling closer to people, that I asked him to tell me what else had changed. He pointed to the notebook in which he wrote his lyrics.

Elizabeth: But you were writing lyrics back in April, so what has happened to make this change?

Chuck: Yeah, I was writing lyrics. But then I was writing just to write. I wasn't seeing what it really meant to me about how I feel.

Elizabeth: Tell me more about that process. How do you use these lyrics? How has it helped you?

Chuck: It's like the feeling, like my feeling at the moment. I write it down and then I look at it and think, you know what, this is how I felt at that time and I need to write a song that will connect to it or use words that will help the world understand as well. So I would say, it's not only about how it makes me feel but also how the world will understand what I'm saying about how I felt at that moment.

Elizabeth: Okay. So let me see if I get this right. You have an emotion, you have a feeling, and then you write a song about it. How does that translate into what you were saying earlier about taking a different approach to making friends? Make that connection for me.

Chuck: Because then I look at it (the song) and I'm like, you know I did feel this way and I could have done it this way or could have done it that way. It makes me see a whole lot more of what...this is the big difference...you know I could do it this way instead of this way...you know, I was trying to make friends by talking a lot and found that was not the best way to do it, so let me try it this way instead. There's always two ways to try everything and if the first one doesn't succeed there's always the second one.

What Chuck appeared to be articulating here was the greater reflexivity evidenced in the stories of the higher hope group, particularly when thinking about alternate ways of achieving their goals. This enhanced learning around how to more effectively make friends had certainly affected Chuck in a positive way. Indeed, the increase in Chuck's level of social connectedness was accompanied by a similarly large increase in the measure of hope, representing 2.25 standard deviations. Still trying to get at why there would be such a big change in the time between our first and second interviews I asked Chuck what he thought was going on.

Chuck: It's probably the fact that I'm about to be 20. Like, you know three months back I realized I'm almost 20 years old and still in high school. What am I going to do with this life? Am I going to do a job I don't like and just be there and tired all day, or am I going to go out there and do something that I really love doing and make something out of myself? So I decided, you know what, do what everybody says you can't do...and that's live my dream. And everybody says, you know, "Oh I had a dream, I had a dream." Well, I had a dream and I'm making it a reality, so it's something I want to do and I'm not giving up.

Elizabeth: Is there something about being 20? What is it about this particular birthday?

Chuck: I'm no longer a teenager. I can't always depend on my mom. I gotta go out there on my own and one day support myself, support a wife when I get one...not if, when. I've got to worry about that instead of doing all that piddling little stuff that's getting me nowhere.

Elizabeth: I know it was one of the things I asked you last time, but where would you say your thoughts are most, the past, the present, or the future?

Chuck: I'd say the present and the future. The way I see it, the past can't...what's done is done, I can't change that. But I can change my present and my future. I can change what's happening here and now and I can change what's happening two weeks from now. It all depends on me.

Elizabeth: So how far into the future do you tend to think when you have those thoughts?

Chuck: Probably five or ten years. And it's not...if you think about it five years is only 60 months away. If twelve months can pass by this fast then 60 months is going to be like a freight train coming up and hitting you if you're not aware, you're not alert.

The shift from average to higher hope, according to that illustration from Chuck, was accompanied by his moving from a principally present-time orientation to thinking more about the future.

Aside from this changed perspective on the future that now separated him from his lower hope peers, Chuck articulated a philanthropic streak similar to that expressed by members of the higher hope group, although in his case it was a little harder to imagine him successfully attaining this particular goal. Imagining what he would do when he had established his music career, Chuck talked about buying a house and a car, helping his mother and members of his immediate family financially, and then “I would help people out. What’s the best thing to do with money except for to make this world a better place?” This seemed in keeping with Chuck’s later definition of hope as “where you have a feeling that there is something that can be done better about a situation.” For him, hope was definitely relational.

When I’m in a hopeful state I hope that somebody succeeds in life and I’m always there to support them, because if I had the same situation I’d want somebody to feel for me as well.

As Larsen, Edey, and LeMay (2005, p. 515) have articulated, “Hope is fostered in relationships where individuals are reminded that they matter to others and where they learn that they are worthy of being heard.” This certainly seemed to have been the case for Chuck. I decided to end our interview by asking him how he would want to be remembered. The now higher hoper answered thus:

As someone who was always there when somebody needed them. Someone that they could put their faith and trust into and know it wouldn’t be wasted. Someone that no matter how bad the times were, I could always make it better...help somebody out through a rough time.

### *Summary of Section One*

According to Locke (2005), there were three fundamental “blocks to goal achievement” (p. 310) and thus happiness, and each of these was exemplified in the stories shared by members of the lower hope group. These blocks were: a) being

irrational or unrealistic, as demonstrated by Loretta in imagining that she could become a lawyer given her lack of even the lowest level of academic attainment, the types of jobs she had held so far, and her criminal record for violence; b) avoiding the “hard thinking” (Locke, 2005, p. 310) that is an antecedent to right action, that both Lorne and Lacey appeared either unwilling or unable to do; and c) the fear that was so prevalent in Lyle’s young life. In his apparent desire to avoid loss, Lyle conformed to what Locke (2005) had described as “the living dead” (p. 310).

What is comforting to note, however, is that lower hope is a state that can be modified by both external and internal changes in one’s life, as exemplified by the two individuals whose hope scores changed dramatically over the course of this study. In examining those two stories in relation to the four themes of hope articulated by Aquinas, namely a future good that is difficult but still possible to attain, Chantal’s and Chuck’s experiences helped to illustrate the different ways in which each of these facets of hope could be achieved.

According to Locke (2005), a first step in attaining one’s goals is to know what they are. It was clear that once Chantal was able to articulate a compelling career goal for herself involving bringing together her “favorite things,” that this enabled her to understand better how to connect present-time educational demands to that future, desired achievement. An ability or willingness to look into the future seemed to be easier for her once the present-time fear of a jail sentence was no longer hanging over her. Similarly, upon seeing that he was having greater success making friends after changing his strategy from talking too much to actually listening to what others had to say, Chuck’s focus also changed to accommodate a future time perspective.

One of the key themes to emerge out of the higher hope participants’ stories, to be described shortly, was that of having values, of which the most fundamental according to Locke (2005) are moral values, indicative of what Aquinas describes as a “good.” Both Chantal and Chuck illustrated the socially acquired nature of values (Rokeach, 1979) and the impact that these had on an individual’s goals by expressing how they had learned from the mistakes of their siblings. For Chantal, this meant rejecting her sister’s lifestyle



of single parenthood and debt. In Chuck's case, he strongly advocated turning his back on the drugs and crime lifestyles of his brothers and sisters.

In terms of the arduous nature of hope according to Aquinas, Chantal and Chuck had acquired strategies for easing the challenges and difficulty inherent in moving toward ambitious goals. Not only did Chantal have loving, supportive parents who acted as positive role models, but she had broken down a long-term intention of owning her own store into smaller, manageable goals that would move her incrementally toward that bigger goal. In Chuck's case, within a less optimal family situation, his support for moving through challenge and adversity came from his music. As such this provided him with a means of introspecting as well as something that he could enduringly count on.

Finally, with respect to Aquinas' fourth theme of what is possible, both Chantal and Chuck had accounted for contingencies by formulating back-up plans should their primary goals not be successful. For Chantal this involved mirroring her parents in working for the State, while Chuck considered that he could maintain his valued connection with music through working in a store selling instruments and other equipment.

At this stage, then, having determined the salience of Aquinas' four themes within the "changer" group in a way that was less in evidence with the members of the lower hope group, let me turn to what emerged from the conversations with the higher hoppers.

## **Section Two: Higher Hope Themes**

In this section I introduce each of the five themes that emerged from the grounded theory analysis, using the participants' stories to illustrate and explain them as appropriate. Table 4.2 outlines the demographic data for each of these participants and offers quotes similar to those that indicated the key focus for members of the lower hope and "changer" groups.

The five themes that emerged from the grounded theory analysis were:

- Perceptions of challenge and uncertainty
- Temporal Comparisons: Envisioning the future, being realistic about the present, learning from the past

- Developing Strategies: Values, Goals, Planning, and Action
- Drawing on personal and social resources
- Openness and flexibility about outcomes

**Table 4.2 Demographic Data for Higher Hope Group**

<b>Name &amp; Key Quote</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Partnership Status</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Graduated on Time?</b>	<b>Father's Education</b>	<b>Religious Views</b>
<b>HONORA</b> "Get on with doing something"	F	20	Hispanic	Single	3	No (pregnancy)	High School drop out	Pente-costal
<b>HELEN</b> "Everything changed from that point"	F	20	White	Single	1	Yes	Technical college	Spiritual but not religious
<b>HARMONY</b> "Happy but not satisfied"	F	19	Hispanic	Married	1	No (pregnancy)	High School drop out	Catholic
<b>HAZEL</b> "I want respect"	F	20	Mixed	Single	1	Yes	Unknown	None
<b>HILARY</b> "Extensions of hope"	F	22	African American	Engaged (fiancé recently released after 5 years in prison for drug-related offences)	1	Yes	Unknown	Spiritual but not religious
<b>HENRY</b> "Why am I here? What am I doing? What is this for?"	M	22	Hispanic	Single	2	Yes	Some college	Non-denominational
<b>HECTOR</b> "A productive member of society"	M	18	Hispanic	Single	0	No (illness)	High School drop out	Spiritual but not religious

### ***Theme One: Perceptions of Challenge and Uncertainty***

As psychologists including Frankl (1984) have attested, it is not what happens to you in life but how you perceive what happens to you that ultimately determine the action you take and the outcomes you set. Although all participants in this study whether lower, average, or higher hope, faced similar kinds of challenge and uncertainty, the higher hope group viewed the disadvantageous changes in their lives in a positive and adaptive way, thereby differentiating them from their lower hope peers.

There were both demographic similarities and differences among the higher hope cohort. As I have outlined in Table 4.2, for example, all of the higher hope interviewees (with the exception of Hector) were teenage parents. All of them apart from Harmony, who was married, and Henry, whose children lived with their mother in another city, were raising their offspring as single parents. While Helen and Henry came from middle-class backgrounds, in terms of their fathers' educational levels, all the rest were lower SES and struggled daily to manage the expenses of children, the cost of college where applicable, and life generally. In order to demonstrate the similarities of thought, despite the differences of background and life experience, I have selected stories from Helen, Honora, Hazel, and Hector to illustrate the first theme in this hope process model.

When we think about teenage pregnancy, girls like Helen do not immediately spring to mind. She was a 16-year old from the "white suburbs" who told me she had never had sex with her "wholesome" quarterback boyfriend during the three years they had dated. Her parents, high school sweethearts themselves, had waited ten years before having a family in order to carve themselves the comfortable, middle-class standard of living that Helen and her younger sister now enjoyed. Helen had been the captain of the cheerleading squad, she had "partied hard" in high school but nevertheless remained on the honors roll, took all the AP classes, and everyone expected her to go to a top tier university after graduating, as many of her peers subsequently did. Indeed, Helen always imagined herself living a life similar to her parents. But the potential for that "storybook ending" unraveled when she became pregnant by a 22-year old "bad boy," and gave birth to a son in the summer prior to starting her senior year.

As Helen articulated, “everything changed from that point.” After the initial shock, during which time she admitted to being “in denial,” Helen and her parents began to articulate how they would adapt to this unexpected situation, remaining positive throughout.

I never said, “Oh I guess I won’t be able to go to college,” and my parents never said that either. They were always very supportive, even though my mom was kind of disappointed and my dad was, like, you know, “You messed up.” They never said, “You go to college and we’ll keep the baby,” but it was, like, “We’ll work with you to make this work.” It was always, “This is your responsibility now, we’ll support you and help you but you need to do this.”

What was strongly emphasized in Helen’s story was how rapidly she adjusted to her new responsibilities as a teen parent, thus more quickly finding the motivation to make the best out of new and challenging circumstances. These were attitudes that I found to be common among all members of the higher hope group who, with the exception of Hector, had between one and three children each. For example, 19-year old Harmony who had dropped out of high school when she became pregnant in her senior year and was earning her missed credits through the youth services organization when I first interviewed her, said she “had to grow up faster than I was planning to do.” Hazel, who was in 9<sup>th</sup> grade when she had her daughter and, like Helen, remained in school and graduated on time, emphasized how she “had to get up and go to school and you have to take your kid too, you just have to.” The typical rapid adjustment to their changed circumstances, including being realistic about the challenges that faced them, were factors that will be explored additionally when discussing later themes.

In Helen’s case the adaptation to motherhood included “shifting” her expectations of the same “storybook ending” illustrated by her parents’ marriage.

You get into college, your boyfriend goes with you, you both get married, you have kids...I had this whole idea, since my parents had done it that way. It was just the realization of not having that one person there and not traveling through life together. My thinking then was that my life is over, you know, things like that. But it’s just that a dream went away and it kind of shifted very quickly from my life being over to, “Okay, now what am I going to do?”

It must be said, however, that Helen's new situation was mitigated somewhat by her middle-class background and greater access to financial resources. The situation was drastically different for 20-year old Honora. Indeed, of all the members of the higher hope group Honora was arguably the most disadvantaged. She came from a lower SES background, had two boys aged 18 months and six months when I first interviewed her, and had just found out she was pregnant with her third child, a girl, who was due just prior to our second interview.

Honora had been influenced to drop out of high school by her children's father after meeting him in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, despite previously getting good grades and putting effort into and enjoying school. She was studying for her GED through the same youth services organization as Harmony but, unlike Harmony who had graduated the day after our second interview, Honora had no specific date for graduating or going on to college. Having originally expressed a desire to become an administrative assistant or secretary, later changing that to "working with children," Honora admitted, "I don't know nobody who's gone to school for that, or did that kind of work, so I don't know what I would have to do to get there or anything." She was due, at the time of our second interview, to discover whether she had lost her minimum wage job working at a children's club. Perhaps not surprisingly, her description of her life as "hard" was a recurrent theme through our conversations, although she did say she was "very satisfied" with her life and that she and her mother were proud of the decision to go back to school to get her GED.

Honora demonstrated the same rapid adjustment to changing circumstances as other members of the higher hope group. This included taking control of her life through becoming more organized, an approach similar to that of Helen. Rather than focusing her attention only on her own problems, Honora also demonstrated a concern for how her circumstances were affecting her mother, thereby previewing the strong association between higher hope and social connectedness that will be discussed in a later theme.

Elizabeth: Are you one of those people who always gets to work or class on time?

Honora: I wasn't, but I've always had that pressure from my mom. "You have to be at work ten minutes early, you have to be at appointments ten minutes early" she was like. Before my kids it did not matter because...like I said,

with my boys and dressing them and thinking sometimes I don't wake up on time or something, I've learned to keep everything ready at nighttime. I'd rather be early now...now I've figured out that...because at times I've missed appointments for getting there late ...I've learned to manage, like I have to catch the earlier bus to get to where I have to get, or leave early to get to work and be there on time or before time.

Elizabeth: You said earlier that your mother is a big form of support for you <she assents>. Has that always been the case?

Honora: Yeah. That's why it's, like, hard now because I see that now she's more tired. Now my sister's going to college my mom's having to buy all her stuff and then she's self-employed...she cleans houses...so financial-wise I know it's hard for her. If I have the money (for gas) I, like, give it to her and if I don't I'm, like <laughs> I'd just rather not ask her if she can do it because I know it's hard for her...it will bring more stress to her.

Despite her day-to-day problems, Honora appeared to hold a positive view of life, one that was remarked upon by others.

Like, my boss asked me one afternoon, "How do you walk in here everyday and just smile?" Because I would tell her, like, I don't have a ride to work today or I'm tired or something. She said, "You don't act like that when you get here, you're still smiling and willing and "what do the kids need, what do you want me to do?"

Honora illustrated how she thought about the challenges in her life when we discussed her emotional reactions to adversity. The following conversation also indicated Honora's perceptions about a person's ability to change their life "if they want to," demonstrating a strong belief in personal control.

Honora: As I said, I don't like stressing myself out. Like me thinking of all the things of a situation I'm going through that's bad. So as soon as I get angry or thinking about all the bad stuff, I don't like it. I'm not going to stress myself out more over it, so I just get over the negative stuff and get on with doing whatever.

Elizabeth: How do you "get over the negative stuff?"

Honora: I just cry. Like, I don't get mad or frustrated. I just cry. I don't feel sad or anything, I just start crying. Then when it's done I'm finished and then I don't want to think of it no more. When I'm crying that's when I'm thinking, like "Why, why, why?" Then I think, "You gotta do something."

Elizabeth: How do you do that?

Honora: Somebody asked me that question too, they're, like, "How can you do so much and not get frustrated?" And I'm, like, "I have to do it." There's no use in getting mad or sitting there crying when I know I have to do it. I'm just going to stress myself out more and then I get nothing done. So I have to get up, I have to take my boys to daycare or find a ride, and I just have to do it to get a better life. I have to.

Elizabeth: How does your children's father play into that?

Honora: He's around but he had a troubled childhood. He's never had a job, like a real job. His dad owns a tree service company and he'll go to work for his dad when he wants to because he likes to sleep all day and be up all night. But he don't have the kind of support like I do. His parents and grandparents were not organized. They moved from one place to another, they drank the same way, getting divorced, getting back together...and he grew up thinking the way they are is normal.

Elizabeth: How do you think he could change his life if he were...

Honora: He has to want to, like, be different. Because I used to, like...my kids actually helped me to change and I figured it would help him change himself too. We get along okay and everything, it's just I don't need somebody sitting there stressing me out more...and he's been like that since he was young...and he's, like, "You're not going to blame me for something that it's like how I grew up," and I was, like, "It's not your fault but you could change it. You have to want to not be mad all day or complain about the smallest things." I was, like, "You could change it and once you decide to change it we can talk about getting back together but I don't need nobody giving me more problems right now."

Hector took a similar attitude toward the challenge and adversity in his life although, unlike Helen and Honora, he did not have children. He had recently earned his GED, having dropped out of high school after being diagnosed with fibromyalgia that caused him to be in considerable pain most of the time. Like Honora, Hector had been a good student with high grades but there appeared to have been a misunderstanding at his high school where his continued absences in order to attend medical appointments were mistaken for truancy. In the end, with the school threatening to take him to court, "I was just like frustrated with the whole situation and, you know, just being diagnosed and trying to live with that, so I dropped out." After doing nothing "for probably six months or maybe even a year," Hector decided to contact the same youth services organization as Harmony and Honora, and "then finally, a few months ago I did finally get my GED." He

was planning to attend the local community college, having registered for a course in Engineering and Design Graphics, “with an architectural specialization.”

Hector’s father, who had never married his mother was, like many other members of his family in prison. When I asked Hector if he had many friends he said, “I’ve never really been big on friends,” partly because “we were always moving everywhere...I’ve been to so many different schools.” Rather than see this as a negative, however, Hector perceived it as a benefit.

We would always move and I would enjoy it. I mean, because I always like to meet new people and it was never a problem, like, “Oh my God, I want to stay at this school all year long” or whatever. It was just, like, “Okay, we have a new house” and the thrill of that was great to me, so that’s why I never really minded it and that’s why I guess I never established really long-term friendships. I’d rather do things with my family members...my mother’s side of the family, you know?

### *Summary of Theme One*

What became apparent to me from the way the members of this higher hope group perceived and faced up to challenge and uncertainty, compared with their lower hope peers, was not just their openness to experience, but also the strong, positive social bonds available to them. These issues have been addressed by Erikson (1963) who postulated that hope develops in early childhood through an optimal balance of trust and mistrust experiences, and in social learning theory that posits that “the major or basic modes of behaving are learned in social situations” (Rotter, 1954, cited in Pintrich & Schunk, 2002, p. 146). Helen had loving, supportive parents, Harmony described her husband as “open-minded” and “really supporting what I want to do,” and both Honora and Hector had close relationships with their respective mothers, with Hector describing his as being “there for me.” Indeed, the rest of the higher hope group either had a parent (usually the mother), fiancé, or close friend that supported them through difficult times. The strong association between higher hope and social connectedness is further examined in Theme Four when I introduce the various personal and social resources from which the higher hope group would draw.



There are two additional points I want to highlight, however, before moving to the next theme of temporal connections. The first is the intrinsic interest that the higher hope participants had across many facets of their lives. According to Izard (1977, cited in Cornelius, 1996), hope was “a subspecies of the basic emotion of interest” (p. 205) and as such had an important motivational role to play in behavior. Although hope “has no easily distinguishable facial expression associated with it” (Cornelius, 1996, p. 205), the Darwinian-inspired psychologist Antoinette Feleky found that some of her participants associated hope with the same look that one has when paying attention to something. Certainly my higher hope participants expressed interest in a lot of different things. For example, Hector talked about “always being pretty interested in architecture and design” and said that he would watch television programs that featured “architects and buildings.”

Having thought about this issue, I considered this wider attention span across a diversity of topics would likely support the means by which the higher hope group more creatively engaged with and solved their on-going challenges.

The second point concerns something that was not apparent from simply analyzing the words that these higher hope individuals spoke. While transcribing the tapes I had interjected emotional responses and facial expressions that I had noted elsewhere, in order to provide a richer understanding of the context in which the interview took place. One of the things I did, for example, was to indicate where the participant or I had laughed. It was not until I was mid-way through interviewing the “hold-out” sample whose stories are presented in Chapter Five, that I realized how often the higher hope participants laughed during these interviews. This was true even when, indeed *especially* when, they related their challenges. The following extract from Honora is just one example.

But it's hard <laughs>...and it always hits me that what I'm going to do when I have three kids. It's going to be hard. Like, most people don't mind watching one kid and two they are, like, “Oh!”...but now three...I don't think I'd find any babysitters because I don't think anyone wants to watch three kids and three kids is a lot to handle <laughs>.

One way of interpreting such laughter when recounting difficulties was that it marked a feeling of embarrassment or shyness. Having gone back through all the transcripts to see how many times and for what reasons the higher hope participants laughed, however, it seemed too prevalent across all the different personalities for that to be the only explanation. The difference in the amount of laughter in the interviews with the higher hope participants was in marked contrast to that of their lower hope peers. For example, after comparing the same amount of time and approximately equal number of transcribed pages for the first interviews conducted with Honora and Loretta, who were the same age and ethnicity, I noted 26 examples of spontaneous laughter from Honora but only nine from Loretta, and many of these were centered on her son who was playing in the room at the time of our interview. With Lacey, the other lower hope female, there were 11 laughter notations in the first interview. This illustration of the more positive emotional experiences that the higher hope participants appeared to be having during these interview sessions was supported by another piece of data, mentioned briefly in Chapter Three, regarding my analysis of the written assignments I had given to each participant. This coding, independently reviewed by two other individuals, revealed that on average the higher hope participants were twice as likely to make references to positive events as to negative events. This additional finding supports my inference that the higher hope group were more inclined to laugh, even if that involved forcing themselves to be happy.

Self-regulating their emotions so that the higher hope individuals focused more on the positive, pleasurable side of life thereby ameliorating their everyday challenges, was a strategy I originally introduced in Chapter Two and will be touched upon again briefly later in this chapter. Certainly, it appeared that these higher hope individuals refused to view their difficulties as insurmountable. Indeed, their tendency to imagine that the future would be better for them was an important factor that is addressed in the next theme.

***Theme Two: Temporal Comparisons—Envisioning the Future, Being Realistic About the Present, Learning from the Past***

As Cooperrider (2003) has articulated, “We human beings create our own realities” through the “artful creation of positive imagery” (p. 370) Echoing Einstein who is quoted as saying that imagination was more important than knowledge, Cooperrider posited that the ability to create such “anticipatory realities” is the bedrock upon which all social advances, including organizational successes, are enacted. Indeed, he argued that “there is no better clue to a system’s overall well-being than its guiding image of the future” (Cooperrider, 2003, p. 383).

Certainly, the tendency to look metaphorically beyond the horizon in order to envision a more compelling and thus motivating future life was a key differentiating factor between the higher hope group and their lower hope peers. That finding, however, was not unexpected given the way that hope has been described as “a cognitive, emotional, and motivational stance toward the future” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 570). What had been less well explicated, but these data provide evidence for, was the ability of these higher hope individuals to compare and connect this future mindedness with the realities of the present, as well as the lessons from the past.

***Envisioning the Future***

Harmony intended to become a police officer and eventually “work my way up into the forensic files.” Being a young, married Hispanic female with a child in a profession that arguably retained a certain misogynistic culture, was perceived as a challenge but not an insurmountable obstacle. Having taken a career inventory in high school, Harmony had been delighted to find that what her “inner self really wanted to do actually came out to be law enforcement.” This merely confirmed what she had already anticipated she would do career-wise, particularly since she had been most interested in the criminal justice classes in high school.

It’s kind of bad that a woman isn’t open to pursue her dreams because I’m sure there are a lot of Hispanic women that would like to do that field, would like to be very valuable. It’s kind of bad that they don’t value themselves highly enough to

do that. I would just say that it's a bad thing that they're not really open-minded to try...there's no harm in trying. If I ever told most people they would say that's impossible. But I'm not afraid of not accomplishing because only a person that's not secure in what they want to be in life, or what they want to do, would think that way. I know I want to do that and if I see a police officer I can imagine myself there.

Harmony's ability to mentally project herself into that world occurred whenever she drove by a police station, at which time she would "see" herself in that role. When I asked her where her thoughts tended to be, Harmony articulated that they were mostly in the future, an orientation common to the higher hope group and something that Harmony appeared to think was natural for everyone.

The past I think about sometimes, but it's mainly the future that actually takes over everything. Just thinking, "What am I going to have in the future, how am I going to do?" that actually is what keeps me going. I don't think that somebody can just sit back and say, "You know what, I'm happy with what I have right now, I'm just going to go in a straight line," because, I mean, if you're renting and you want a house then that's a change for them in the future.

This comparison between the present and the future was not a negative in Harmony's eyes, in the sense of making her despair of her current circumstances, although she did indicate some dissatisfaction with her current state. She described herself as "happy with life <laughs>...but I'm not satisfied with what I have accomplished so far. I'm not done yet." Indeed, she attributed becoming more future-time oriented to motherhood, in that "now I have a little girl I can't just live each day as it comes because if I do that and have money right now I'm going to waste it, and tomorrow won't have money to buy diapers."

Other members of the higher hope group described their connections between the present and the future similarly. For them the future was qualitatively different to the past and they made constant comparisons between what they had now or previously, and what they wanted for themselves or their children at some future time. The future informed what the higher hoppers needed to do in the present in order to make their goals a reality, and was also the means by which they anticipated the problems that might occur if they

did not take action in the present. In imagining their futures they continually asked themselves, “What if?”

Helen, for example, whom I introduced in the previous theme, found that projecting into the future was useful for negotiating all the valued aspects of her life.

I’m always weighing options and thinking about outcomes. Like getting into the nursing program and what that’s going to do with my friend time, because I value our time together just as much as I do family time. So I talk to my friends just to get an idea of, you know, “Are you guys willing to be...not willing to stick around because I have tests and stuff to study for? Are you guys going to be able to meet me at a coffee shop?” We really did not want to have those kinds of discussions, like, “I think I can schedule you in on Mondays.” But it’s just, you know, “This is what it’s going to be like and don’t get upset if I don’t call for a week.”

This issue will be further explored in the next theme when I address the “back-up plans” or alternative options that the higher hope participants embraced.

The temporal span imagined by members of this higher hope cohort varied considerably but was certainly longer than the few weeks or months described by the lower hope participants. As an extreme example, Hazel was able to project herself twenty years into the future. She had very clear goals with respect to her career and she had taken action to successfully move toward them since graduating high school. Having accrued experiences in various secretarial and administrative capacities with a variety of non-profit organizations, Hazel determined that this was the world in which she wanted to remain.

I really wanna stay in non-profit...I really like the type of people who work for them. They’re who I learn from and I learned so much even at 18 that I can take with me until I’m, like, 30, and just keeping building on it. Money’s not really a factor for me, it’s just doing what I want to do. The secretarial job I do right now is teaching me all this stuff...like, I do payroll so I could go and do a payroll job, but I don’t want to do that, I want to stay with non-profit. I would see myself definitely at the head of a company like (mentions local non-profit agency). The CEO there is (gives name) and, like, I could totally see myself doing something like that when I’m, like, her age. Because I’m barely twenty and I think she’s in her 40s. So that’s, like, 20 years to build on what I am now.

A similar tendency to envision the future as being different to her present life was articulated by Honora who, like Harmony, expressed dissatisfaction between what she had now and what she wanted for her life.

I think it (the future) will be different...because I don't want to be the same way, like going to work all day and hardly spending time with my kids. Like, if I had a good job to where it paid enough to where I only work, like, an 8-hour shift during the daytime then I would have, like, the evenings with my kids. They will be going to school during the daytime too, in a couple of years, so everything would work out better than my night job and going to school and having a lot of things to do in one day. When I have a career and a good job I can just go to work, come home and it's the rest of the time for myself and my kids.

The future was not always imagined to be a place offering a panacea for all their ills, however. As Honora had expressed in the previous theme, she appreciated that her future was going to be even harder once she had three young children under the age of two years. In the main, however, the members of the higher hope group each believed that their future would be better than the present. Indeed for Hilary, whose fiancé had been imprisoned for eight years one month after she found out that she was pregnant with their child, maintaining a positive perspective about the future made the present-time challenges easier to bear, given that "I'm not going to be in it (the present) forever. It's hard in the day-to-day, but when I look at the future it seems so much easier." For Hilary, as it was for most of the higher hope cohort, the future represented the motivation to move through the challenges of the present.

This expectation that things would be better should not be confused with optimistic thinking that has been defined as "the generalized expectancy of good versus bad outcomes in life" (Carver & Scheier, 2001, p. 41). As explicated by Affleck, Tennen, and Apter (2001), optimists are said to count their blessings rather than focus on their problems. As illustrated by the previous example of Helen, who had thought about how being in the nursing program might detrimentally impact her relationship with her friends, the tendency of the higher hoppers was to think of what might go wrong *first* and then use their future time orientation to play out various scenarios in their heads that might mitigate or avoid potential problems. The comparative relationship between the

future and the present, therefore, appeared to be one in which the “now” represented the touchstone against which the higher hope participants could measure or acknowledge changes that they desired to make happen in the future.

### ***Being Realistic About the Present***

In order to articulate the greatest distinction between what they wanted in the future and what they had in the present, it appeared salient that the higher hope participants would realistically assess their current situations. For example, with respect to her relationship with the father of her three children, Honora told me that “I don’t really depend on him to help me out emotionally or with things, because I know he’s not doing good himself. So how am I going to take something away from him <laughs>?”

Similarly, Henry had realized that he was unlikely to reprise the relationship he once had with the mother of his children, or be able to move forward with his “natural inclination” that his college degree had primed him for given certain “bad decisions” he had made in the past. Years earlier, Henry had “cheated” on this woman twice, even though they had planned to get married, and now he was continually trying to salvage what he could from that relationship given that she had decided they remain just friends for the sake of their two young children. Henry’s commitment to those relationships was such that he now eschewed his dream of getting into music promotion because “it’s not conducive to being a good father. There’d be a lot of traveling and just rock and roll, sex and drugs you know.” Given that he had decided not to pursue that career path, but currently had a lack of a clear career focus and found it hard to build up any savings because of paying child maintenance, Henry described himself as “living paycheck to paycheck (that) keeps me thinking in the present.”

Indeed, Henry’s professed preference to think about the present, a feature of lower levels of hope, seemed at first to be an example of a “negative case” (Maxwell, 2005) that adds to the richness of qualitative data.

I don't have...I think foresight, like I can't see in the future very well because I'm so much of a type of person who is in the moment, who lives because today's today, you know. I can look, you know, into the future to what's going to happen

but I'm not very good at that and maybe it's a lack of maturity that incurs that but I'm more about now...right now, what's going to happen now and so I, like, will make a decision and later on it will be, like, "Man this was a bad decision, this was the worst thing I could have done...I can't believe I did that," and why it happens is because I did not have enough foresight to think, "Okay, well, what could happen?"

Henry's focus on the present confused me at that time. He had scored higher on hope and social connectedness at the first implementation of these measures, average on both scales during the second administration when employment and financial problems appeared to be bearing down on him, but he had bounced back even higher on both measures the third time around. Because Henry's scores had never been low I retained him in the higher hope group rather than classify him as a "changer." But if Henry was not misplaced in the higher hope group, how might I account for his claims of a strong present-time focus rather than the future-time orientation typical of the other higher hope participants?

This conundrum was clarified after I had interviewed Troy, one of the higher hope participants from the hold-out sample whose stories appear in Chapter Five. Troy had scored high on hope when I first administered that scale during his last semester in high school, but his hope score had fallen to the mean when we met for our interview one semester into his college experience. Troy's scores on social connectedness, however, remained high on both occasions. Throughout our interview Troy appeared to exhibit all of the characteristics typical of higher hope individuals, including "looking forward into the future," and believing that his future would always be better than the past or present. However, he also said that he was typically "dealing with stuff that is going on right then and there," that is, he was present-time focused.

When I queried Troy on why his thoughts were in the present, he explained that this was where he needed them to be, because of the current fast-paced and highly challenging circumstances he was facing in college. His strategy appeared to be to push his future career goals to the back of his mind in order to accent the things he must focus on in the present. Otherwise, he reasoned, there was a high risk that he would fail his courses and those future career goals would not become attainable. It appeared from



Troy's example that in certain high-challenge or high-stress situations this was an additional, flexible approach employed by higher hope individuals that involved shifting their temporal focus from the future to the present and back again, as the situation warranted.

Since Troy had taken a hope instrument in which a number of the items were concerned with the future during one of these challenging periods, it seemed reasonable to infer that the necessity of concentrating his focus on the present had prompted the lowering of his level of hope to average, even though the interview data clearly indicated that he was a higher hope individual. Further issues concerning the use of self-report instruments to definitively assign individuals as lower or higher in hope are discussed in Chapter Six.

Henry's present-time situation in which he was "living paycheck to paycheck" was, like Troy's college experience, sufficiently demanding for him that the most realistic thing he could do was focus on what was happening in the "now." Henry clearly understood the value of future thinking, however. For example, when talking with his friends, "my advice is always, contrary to my belief or what I practice, to think about what you want and think about it far into the future you know, and begin with the end in mind." Nevertheless, he found it difficult to regulate his tendency to, "go off on a fork in the road so I don't stick to my plan" because, "I'm so much of a type of person who's in the moment." This may have been either a reaction to his mother, whom Henry described as "stuck in her rules, and I want to be the opposite of that," his father whom he wished to emulate and was described as "a happy-go-lucky kind of guy," or both. When we talked about the way lower hope individuals might think, however, Henry regarded himself as distinct from them.

Why make a plan that may not make things go better when you can just go with the flow? Someone who is not hopeful, I think they'd say that a lot. They have lost all sense of hope so why plan for anything when they know it's not going to happen? But I think one needs to have some sort of idea where they're going. It doesn't have to be detailed plan, but if you're not held accountable by anything...I think I need to set my sails, make some sort of plan, have a skeleton at least that I could put some muscles on...build some character with it and I think

that's coming with maturity as I grow older and the realization that I can't continually live my life being the way that I am 100% of the time because some things need structure, need an organized thought, not just decisions made on a whim.

This suggested an alternative interpretation for why Henry appeared to be more disposed to fluctuate between a present-time and future-time focus, certainly compared with other members of the higher hope group who maintained their orientation toward the future, regardless of present-time stressors. I would posit that while Henry had an intellectual appreciation of the value of mental imaging he nevertheless lacked some of the character strengths that contributes toward what Henry called "maturity." The topic of character strengths is more expansively addressed in the next theme, when I review the personal resources upon which the higher hope individuals were able to draw.

Nevertheless, the self-understanding implied in Henry's last quote seemed typical of the way that the higher hope participants had learned from their mistakes of the past in order to be more vigilant in ensuring such tendencies did not prevent them from achieving their desired futures.

### ***Learning from the Past***

The past had an important role to play in the lives of these higher hope individuals, as exemplified by Hilary and Henry who used the value of hindsight to acknowledge that they themselves could be potential obstacles to their future success. Hilary, for example, explained how she had a tendency to have lots of great ideas that she would then change her mind about and hence not follow up on. Her "biggest obstacle" in that regard was "convincing myself why this is not gonna work and forget about it and think of something else," thereby fueling a concern about starting things "because I'm afraid of quitting." Having given considerable thought to this issue, Hilary had learned "not to get people involved in my goals until I can actually see the beginning stages, or know what my next step will be." In that regard she had chosen to be seen as someone who makes things happen, rather than a person who is all talk but no action, an obvious motivational strategy.

Hilary had also become more mindful of her tendency to put others' needs ahead of her own, an issue that had been typical of her since childhood that she now realized could get in the way of her own important goals.

Elizabeth: Why is it important for you to help people?

Hilary: I'm not really sure. It's just always been that way. I think that it comes from being the middle child. I was always trying to make somebody else happy. If my sister was crying I would not want her to cry. I would prefer myself to cry than her to cry. I can always remember from being small, if we would go somewhere and it would be a situation where there was all three of us and there was only room in the bed for two people, it would always be those two. I would insist on taking the floor, you know? <laughs> I really care for people and I really care for their comfort and their wellbeing, although I don't think that's for everybody.

Elizabeth: So you are empathetic?

Hilary: Yeah, <laughs> so I have to be careful about having really committed friendships, especially when I know that I have a lot of things I'm working on myself, and I really want to focus on those things. I have to be really careful of that because I really get into people's problems and pains and suffering and I will take them on.

Henry articulated a similar concern in terms of being an obstacle to his own success by commenting that, "I've planned to fail, because I failed to plan." Although he was the same age as Hilary, and at 22 years old represented the upper age limit for these study participants, he apparently had not yet learned to control his natural tendency to "make decisions on a whim," despite the negative consequences that often resulted from them. This presumably represented the complex interaction of personality and social influences. In that regard, I gave consideration to a possible reason why Hilary had consistently increased her hope scores across three implementations of that measure while Henry's scores had been more affected by current circumstances. Aside from both being teenage parents, it appeared that Hilary's upbringing and life circumstances, particularly involving drugs and crime among members of her extended family, was quite different from Henry's comfortable middle-class childhood and adolescence. Perhaps it was precisely *because* of being exposed to more challenging circumstances that Hilary

had learned more quickly to derive benefit from life's lessons, while Henry was still in the process of discovering how to do that.

Finally for this sub-section, and in order to illustrate the complex, intricate links among the three temporal spaces, Harmony articulated an interesting perspective in which she used the present and the future to understand the past.

As I will discuss more fully in later themes when I review the nature of the goals that these higher hope participants held, Harmony echoed many members of this higher hope cohort by expressing how much she wanted to help people. An underlying motivation for becoming a police officer, for example, was to "go out and help the Hispanics that don't have the advantage of knowing English." Her role would be that "whenever they are stopped by a police officer they need translation, then we'll be called and we can go and help them out."

We then talked briefly about Harmony's interest in the perspectives of both the "guilty and the non-guilty." I asked her to tell me more about that.

I just love being able to see how other people think by a guilty person's point of view. Like, why they are driven to do things that they do. So I know that in that field I can match the goal. I basically was going to do psychology because of that...that was going to be my main goal. But I realized from a psychologist's point of view you only get certain people...that you don't get all the people out there. From a law enforcement you can do...any kind of people. They don't necessarily have to be bad, good or whatever. You can do any kind of people and I can explore why they do what they do...why are they driven to do everything they do?

Harmony went on to say that this would "make me feel better," because "my life's been really rough...my parents divorced...I've been in and out of homes and all that." In that regard, Harmony felt that working in law enforcement would bring her into contact with people similar to those from her past and that would be beneficial in helping her "understand why all that happened to me," in order to fill an existing void.

Harmony: I can actually say it would help me fill some emptiness in my life as to why all that actually happened the way it did, and all that. That's actually my point of view as why I would actually be satisfied of knowing how

people think, why they do what they do, to actually fulfill why it actually happened the way my life happened, and all that.

Elizabeth: To try and get more of an understanding why the negative things that have happened in your life have come about?

Harmony: And why negative things actually happen in other people's lives. What drives them to that point. So that's what I would say I would get out of it. I would fill an emptiness that's missing there. But I could definitely say it would actually help me.

In relating their experiences, the over-abiding emphasis for the higher hope group was to draw positively on the past as a means of learning more about themselves or as a way of preparing for a better future. This was in striking contrast to members of the lower hope group for whom the past was simply a place of regret and lost opportunities.

### ***Summary of Theme Two***

The future is the place of dreams as well as where hopes reside. This is perhaps why being hopeful has been criticized for being “the worst of evils because it prolongs the torment of man,” (Nietzsche, 1878, cited in Menninger, 1959, p. 483), as well as being associated with unfulfilled expectations or “false hopes” (Polivy & Herman, 2000, p. 131). Nevertheless, in imagining various future scenarios, realistically comparing ideal outcomes with the place at which they were in the present moment, and drawing on the lessons from the past, the members of the higher hope group did not give me the impression that they were simply dreamers. Quite the contrary, they realistically recognized that the future is not fixed and that the unexpected can occur at any time. That is why they tended to formulate “back-up plans” or alternative avenues for their careers and other goals, as will be explained further in the next theme. Unlike lower hope individuals such as Lacey, who dismissed the future as “kind of pointless to imagine,” given that “it's probably not going to turn out that way,” the higher hope group readily accepted the emergent nature of the future. Their ability to adhere to what Cooperrider (2003) refers to as the “heliotropic hypothesis” (literally, to turn toward the light), thereby exhibiting a “tendency to evolve in the direction of positive anticipatory images of the future” (p. 370), was both supported by present-time actions, and (with the exception, perhaps, of Henry) the practical wisdom gleaned from past experiences. In

Henry's case it could be argued that he had *wisdom* as defined by Peterson and Seligman (2004) as "the ability to take stock of life in large terms" (p. 106) but he remained a relative novice, certainly compared with the other members of the higher hope group, at enacting "the coordination of this information and its deliberate use to improve well-being" (p. 106).

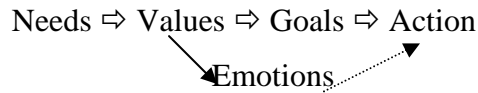
The higher hoppers, nevertheless, appeared better equipped to confront and control the changes in their lives because of their ability to make these temporal connections. This stands in contrast to the usual view of hope as concerning a propensity to focus only on the future. It is in this area that I believe my model of the hope process addresses many of the criticisms of hope as illusory, or involving "overconfidence or unrealistic expectations," as argued by Polivy and Herman (2000, p. 130) and others.

In the meantime, I believe it is becoming clear that the higher hope participants took a more strategic approach to their lives, as the next theme helps to clarify.

### ***Theme Three: Developing Strategies – Values, Goals, Planning, and Action***

As Austin and Vancouver (1996) have articulated, the extent to which psychologists have focused on various aspects of the goals construct has produced an enormous body of work. Similarly, the review of hope theories in Chapter Two together with Table 1.1 on page 7 reveal how many of these postulations are centered on goals. Indeed, the focus on goal pursuit lies at the heart of Snyder and his colleagues' (Snyder et al., 1991) highly influential hope model. Considerably less focus has been given to the *values* construct in the psychological literature on hope, despite Csikszentmihalyi and Larson's (1984) acknowledgement that values "shape attention in terms of future expectations" (p.17). One exception to this is the hope model explicated by Averill et al. (1990) whose "rules of hope" articulated in Chapter Two included the "moralistic rule" or inclination toward goals that have been appraised as personally or socially acceptable. Certainly, according to Aquinas' definition of hope as the desire to attain a future "good," the implication is that hoped-for goals are underpinned by values, and this became evident as I discussed the aspirations and anticipations of the higher hope participants. Indeed, in many cases, it seemed to me that I could only truly understand the higher

hoppers' goals in relation to the values that had influenced them. This is supported by the theoretical connection between values, goals, and action, as articulated by Locke's (2005) "motivation sequence" (p. 303):



**Figure 3. Locke's Motivation Sequence**

Let me begin this portion, however, by clarifying what is meant by each of the terms under discussion. In particular, I think it is important to articulate the difference between *values* and the arguably more commonly studied psychological construct, *valences*. Feather (1995, p. 1135) distinguished them thus:

*Values* can be conceived as abstract structures that involve the beliefs that people hold about desirable ways of behaving or about desirable end states. These beliefs transcend specific objects and situations, and they have a normative, or oughtness, quality about them...They are assumed to function as criteria or frameworks against which present experience can be tested...values are properties of persons.

In contrast:

*Valences* refer to the subjective attractiveness or aversiveness of specific objects and events within the immediate situation. The emphasis here is on the goal properties of potential actions and outcomes...valences are linked to a specific context and to a present time frame.

Because a primary goal of my inquiry was to identify the different ways in which higher hope individuals think, feel, and act in relation to their lower hope counterparts, I shall only be exploring values and not valences here. It had become clear that all the study participants, regardless of whether they had scored higher or lower on hope, recognized the positive valence of developmentally-salient goals. For example, all members of the lower hope group appreciated the value of graduating high school on time and pursuing their education as much as the higher hoppers did. All participants, regardless of their level of hope, wanted jobs that were both enjoyable and personally

meaningful. Each was striving to establish their independence and most looked to carve a life for themselves that included achieving better living conditions, a life partner, and in some cases children. For this reason the focus of this sub-section is on “oughtness” as “properties of persons” (Feather, 1995, p. 1135), rather than on the socially constructed “goodness” of specific goals.

As an interesting side note, Locke (2005) had articulated that values do a poor job in guiding choices and actions when they are focused on present-time, short-term rewards, as opposed to future, longer-term benefits. This may help account for why orienting their goals around values, as will become clear shortly, appeared to differentiate the largely future-focused higher hopers from their present-time lower hope peers.

With respect to a definition of goals, Locke (2005) regarded them to represent “the means by which values and dreams are translated into reality” (p. 311). Goals have been generally defined as “internal representations of desired states, where states are broadly construed as outcomes, events, or processes” (Austin & Vancouver, 1995, p. 338). Models positing the structure of goals, based on Wiener’s (1948) “cybernetic unit” (Austin & Vancouver, 1995, p. 340), have articulated that individuals continually strive to minimize the difference between a future, desired state, and the one currently being experienced. This contrast suggests both a future time orientation and also the decision to delay immediate gratification that I found to be typical of the higher hope participants in this study.

With respect to the term *planning*, Shade (2001) has argued that the difference between hope and planning concerns “the degree to which realization of the end lies within our grasp” (p. 55). He stressed that planning is the more salient approach “when an end’s means are not only conceivable but also directly within our grasp” (p. 54). This contrasts with hope that, as articulated by Honora, is less probabilistic because “you don’t know what’s going to happen.” In the context of this study I am using the word *planning* to illustrate the “back-up plans” or alternative options that all the higher hope participants had formulated in order to increase the likelihood of successfully attaining personally



important goals, and to boost their experience of positive emotions while pursuing those goals.

Finally, with respect to defining terms, I have used the word *action* according to the standard, dictionary definition of “the process or state of acting or of being active” (taken from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/action> on January 12th, 2008), rather than address the theoretical ramifications of *action tendencies* (Frijda, 1986, cited in Cornelius, 1996) that have been linked to emotions.

As Feather and Newton (1982) have articulated, values not only “serve as standards or criteria” (p. 220) in the selection of some individuals’ goals but they are a “particular class of motives” that are related to taking action. It is for that reason I chose to address values, goals, and action within the same sub-section, with planning illustrated separately.

### ***Values, Goals, and Action***

As Rokeach has variously illustrated (e.g., 1968, 1973, 1979), there are many different types of values. The 18 values that appear on the Rokeach Value Survey, for example, range from the specific: prosperity, family security, and social recognition, to the more abstract: freedom, salvation, and world peace. In the following three stories, the goals and accompanying actions of 1) Hector, were associated with values of prosperity, inner harmony, and family security; 2) for Hazel the driving motivation was self-respect and social recognition; while 3) Hilary was concerned with a sense of accomplishment, better access to resources for the disadvantaged, and a better world for her son. Despite selecting only these three participants to illustrate this sub-section, values appeared to lie at the heart of goal-setting for all of the higher hope participants.

In contrast to the goals literature that has emphasized the benefits of approach goals and the deleterious effect of avoidance goals (Ames, 1992), this distinction did not appear to hold true for approach and avoidance *values*. This is perhaps not surprising given that, according to Frijda (1986, cited in Cornelius, 1996), desire is associated with approach while fear is linked with avoidance, and that both of these emotions are inherently associated with hope, as explained in Chapter Two.

In Hector's case the "oughtness" that Feather (1995) described in relation to values concerned his determination to "become a better, productive person for society," and as a result achieve not only his desire for greater prosperity but a reduction in worry, such as being able to "pay all my bills without a problem." The following quote illustrates both the approach goals associated with going to school and getting a good job that Hector associated with financial security, and his avoidance or rejection of the lifestyle choices of many members of his family.

I've known the bad side and I've kind of lived that side and, you know, dabbled in it a few times and it's just, like, I don't want to get into trouble, I don't want to go to jail like a lot of my family and stuff like that. That's not for me, and the best way for me to stay out of that situation is to go to school, get a job, keep working, just do that so that my mind is not...I'm not sidetracked by my family just because of my family hanging around with them, and then get into trouble for doing whatever we're doing <laughs>. So you know it's just, like, I don't want that for my life, I do not. I don't want to be in prison you know, or anything like that, so that's one of the big motivations for me to do something with my life also.

As Hector explained, his decision to go back to school to get his GED and then a college education, even though he had always found going to school "inconvenient," was part of his desire to "better my life." His education and career goals were clearly linked to the underlying value of being a "good person that functions well and doesn't have any problems with anyone." Not only did he wish to avoid the negative consequences of the anti-social behavior that had led many of his family members including his father to jail, but at age 18 Hector articulated that "now it's time for me to grow up."

After dropping out of high school and then spending "probably six months or maybe even a year," when he "wasn't doing very much at all," Hector spurred himself to action and contacted the youth services organization that provided financial and other assistance to individuals with "barriers to opportunity."

I was in a bad situation and I did not have any money coming in, as I said. I wasn't working or doing anything really but they assisted me by helping with gas and food whenever I needed it and they would also even pay my rent. They did a great job and encouraged me a lot. They helped me with a lot of things and I enjoyed the experience.

Within a few months, Hector had attained his GED and went on to register for classes at the local community college. When I asked him if he believed that anything was possible, Hector responded positively.

Yes I do. I do believe that anything is possible. But in order for anything to be possible I need to handle situations the best way that I can. Meaning that I just need to do it for myself, I need to take it upon myself to make it possible so that I can get real far in life and just...make money <laughs>.

Hazel also had every intention to go far in life. The underlying values that spurred her on, however, were self-respect and social recognition.

I've done a lot more things than my mom ever did. She kinda just did nothing, you know. She got, like, a GED but she never had any job over \$8 an hour and so I never respected her. I knew I wasn't going to be stuck as a waitress when I was 40. I knew I wanted to be a secretary and as soon as I turned 18 I signed up for AmeriCorps. I knew that I wanted to have professional jobs so I was a teacher's aid at 18 with no experience at all. I got to do that and I've never gone back. I'm not going to be a waitress ever. I'm not going to be a maid. Or even just like the other jobs I've seen a lot of the girls I went to high school do...they're strippers and I just think that's the stupidest, most crappy job that you could ever have. Even just other people I've known growing up had all these terrible, terrible jobs. Like I've known prostitutes, crack dealers, drug dealers. Their whole life was that nastiness and I just knew that was not for me.

In that regard, every action that Hazel took in pursuit of her career goals was calculated to be in accordance with her value for "respect."

I've always known that I wanted stuff and I knew what I needed to do to get it and have gone after it. I don't actually know where I got that from, although I think my drive comes from seeing people do stuff like selling their bodies for money or shaking their bodies around for money. I'm going to do something good, and every job I've ever had it was worth something. I mean, I was a teacher's aid for two years at (mentions non-profit organization) and I earned a \$9,000 scholarship because of that. When I was at (charter high school) I was an intern and, like, I got all this respect from the kids that were about my age. It was just because, they knew, this is her job, this is who she is, this is how she carries herself. I guess one of my biggest drives has been respect.

Hilary, the only African American participant in this study, was driven also toward a sense of accomplishment, although many of the values she held concerned improving the lives of others and not just herself. She had always been in AP classes during high school and graduated when she was 16. Although her mother was a teacher, Hilary said there never were any conversations about going to college and certainly no financial planning was made for that event. Of the three children in her family she was the only one who was considered academic. Her younger sister was athletic and so her mother “kinda pushed her” more toward sports. With respect to Hilary’s older brother the prevailing attitude was “just do anything that’s not crime.”

Hilary’s best friend since elementary school, whose mother was a university professor, had always been expected to go to college. Both girls applied for and were admitted to the same university in Philadelphia at the age of 16. The best friend stayed on and graduated but Hilary dropped out after her freshman year because she got into problems with financial aid and was asked to leave. In contrast to many other participants who told me they had no interest in schoolwork that did not count toward their grades Hilary admitted, “There was still classes that I was actually going to, knowing that I wasn’t able to get any credit for, just because I was interested in the class and because I still wanted to get something out of that experience.”

After returning home Hilary was doing “little odd and end jobs” when she met her son’s father who had a long history of juvenile crime. After a year together, Hilary found herself pregnant at 19. A month later her fiancé was sent to jail for eight years for drug-related offences. The experience of having him in prison gave Hilary considerable pause for thought.

(I’m) not happy with him for making the decisions that he made to put him in that position and at times I get unhappy with myself for supporting the decisions he was making when we were just out living a crazy life. But, it’s mostly, like...the whole system that’s put into place and seeing this happening over and over to families where it’s, like, the guy goes to jail, there’s a family, there’s a kid and it just breaks up the family and nothing is being done about that. That’s what makes me the most unsatisfied. I’m, like, “Gosh, I wish there was something I could do,”

you know? So, like, trying to figure out what that thing is that I can do is the biggest thing that's holding me up right now.

At our second interview a month later, Hilary reported that she had emailed her thoughts to the Office of the Attorney General concerning the challenges of being a parent with someone who is incarcerated “and now they're, like, they are looking at funding to start getting more resources for people.” Apparently the confidence for taking that step had come about because of our earlier interview.

Because after I met with you the first time...a lot of the times you think about the things that you want to do but when you actually speak it, then to me it's more of an accountability thing. Like, I've told somebody about this so I need to do something about it. So it was really that...it was that kind of fired it off.

Like Hazel, who was able to recount a series of career steps and other successes that she had accomplished since graduating from high school, Hilary also had many examples of how taking action had helped her reap tangible rewards. For example, she had been promoted to program specialist for AmeriCorps planning for the non-profit organization that had originally trained her and other teenage parents to become peer educators. It was with a more mundane example, however, that Hilary illustrated how she linked values, goals, and action.

One of Hilary's New Year's resolutions after moving into her own apartment had been “just to be more clean, like around the house,” something that had never been a major focus when she was growing up at home. As Hilary described it, “I wasn't ever required to clean anything,” but that “just because this was the life that I was taught doesn't mean that it's the one that I want.” Hilary had read somewhere that “if you do something like 21 days in a row then it becomes a habit.” She therefore made it a goal to get into a routine where she would not go to bed with dishes in the sink. Now, “I've done it so long it's, like, I always have clean dishes and it's not, like, the biggest goal in the world but it's big for me.” But there were other, unexpected emotional and social benefits.

It makes me feel responsible and it makes me feel even better when I see my son go take his cup to the sink and I'm like, wow, he just picked that up and I did not even have to tell him, you know, go do it. It was like something that he picked up for himself so I'm teaching him something kind of innately and he won't, you know, have to figure it out for himself.

Aside from bringing up her son to be a responsible individual, Hilary continued to focus on her long-term goal of establishing and running her own program for families with loved-ones who were incarcerated. Totally unsolicited, and before she knew the underlying focus of my study, Hilary told me she had decided to call such a program "Extensions of Hope."

(Thinking about that) makes me feel joy. It makes me forget, like, the things that I'm dealing with or that are painful for me. It makes me think, "Okay, there's hope...there's hope for the future." I'm always concerned that I'm not going to be here forever and I would like my son to live in a world that is a lot more peaceful and happy. So whatever I can do to make that happen, I would like to.

The way in which these higher hope participants made things happen was not simply by thinking about what they wanted to achieve, based on their core values, but also by taking action. However, they appeared to be strategically aware, possibly because of their appreciation for the vagaries of the future that even well-articulated and actively pursued goals could unexpectedly change. One way they maneuvered around such likelihoods was to formulate "back-up plans," thereby ensuring that they would experience the fulfillment of *some* goal, even if it was not the one they had originally conceived. That is the focus of the next topic.

### ***Planning***

The discussion of Harmony's career goals thus far has focused on her desire to work in law enforcement. The underlying value of this for Harmony concerned her interest in "helping people." In addition to going to school to earn her high school diploma, Harmony was a peer educator in the same program as Helen and Henry and said that when it came to "changing people's lives, I love it." She was also deeply committed to her family, namely her 20-year old husband and six months' old daughter. Harmony

had realized that her desire to become a police officer might come into conflict with raising a family, given the unsocial hours and potential dangers involved. She had already determined that “if it’s taking away from my family I am not going to be able to pursue it, even though it is my dream...my family’s always going to come first.” Harmony’s stated priority was her daughter and the potential for a closer relationship than she had experienced with her own mother. Therefore, it was realistic for Harmony to have in mind an alternative career, should the plan to go into law enforcement not bear out. Her plan was to take a four year course at the local community college to get her bachelors’ degree, and the first class she had signed up for was psychology.

Harmony: I’m also going to go into the eight months training for nurse assistant, for doctor’s assistant, just to have something to fall back on, just in case.

Elizabeth: You can do those two things at the same time?

Harmony: Yeah, well actually to become a police officer all you need is to take 60 hours.

Elizabeth: 60 hours of...?

Harmony: Any kind of college. That’s two years, basically. But you can do it in anything you want and I know I’m going to do psychology and then I’m going to do the eight months training for a nurse, put in the hours for nursing...for doctor’s assistant while I’m keeping the hours for the police officer’s stuff. Do both if I can. It’s good to have something to fall back on because, God forbid, if something does happen in the future...I can’t be a police officer or whatever, I will have something that I can follow up on.

By the time I conducted the second interview, Harmony had investigated and was planning to pursue another alternative career working for the ambulance service, whose requirements involved taking the same classes that she had already intended to cover for the nursing qualification. I asked her how she was making sense of those three things: police officer, doctor’s assistant, and EMS, to which Harmony replied that “all three involve going out and helping people.”

Helen was similarly inspired to help others in her career.

I’d seen a DVD called *Invisible Children* about these kids in Africa who are taken into slavery and stuff, and I was like, “I want to go there, I want to help.” You know, you get all fired up when you see things like that. Then I fell back and thought, “What am I going to do if I go over there?” you know. I don’t have any

skills to help them, like, I can be there and talk and things like that, but...if I was a nurse I could go over and help in any way, or I could do Doctors Without Borders and be a nurse. That's what I really want to do.

At our second interview, Helen reported that she had been accepted into a highly competitive nursing program at her first attempt, an accomplishment that she associated with having maintained a 4.0 GPA despite the challenges posed by being a single parent. I asked her what she had thought and felt while waiting to hear whether her application had been successful. Helen's response spoke to the way in which having alternatives to fall back on mitigated the negative emotions associated with failure, as well as giving an indication of her "explanatory style" (Seligman, 1990, p. 40).

I was weighing options...I was thinking, like, if I don't get in which there's a chance that I won't because I did not know how many people had applied, well it's okay if I don't get in this time because I've got this job, I can get more established in this and maybe I'll find something in this that I really want to get into after nursing. Like, you know, if I worked here full-time for a year then I could save money to get an apartment and I could save money to get out on my own a little bit quicker, even though I'll still have the nursing program to get through after that. So I was really happy that I got in but I was okay with not knowing because I felt like I had a back-up plan...like, I felt I was prepared and I could go either way. It wouldn't have been devastating to me if I did not get in, I would just feel like, "oh, there were a lot of people who applied there."

The implication of the effort and preparation that Helen had expended prior to submitting her application for the nursing program, suggested that she had found positive meaning within an uncertain situation by attributing some part of that outcome to an issue outside of her control, i.e., the number of applicants she was competing against.

With respect to the general attributional model (Weiner, 1986), this was one further similarity among members of the higher hope group that differentiated them from their lower hope peers. The higher hoppers had both an internal locus-of-causality and sense of control over their lives. Their strong belief that expending effort would enable them to achieve their goals presumably contributed toward the tendency to believe that their future would be better than their past. Additionally, they attributed their difficulties to be temporary and context specific. Certainly, they did not regard the problems that



they faced to be fixed or global, in the sense that they applied all of the time, to all areas of their lives. As such, the higher hope participants arguably exhibited less of the “learned helplessness” (Peterson, Maier, & Seligman, 1993) than did Lyle and Lacey, for example.

### ***Summary of Theme Three***

The stories offered in this sub-section illustrate the ways in which these higher hope participants thought, felt, and acted in order to increase their chances of successfully attaining their most important educational and career goals. Evidence suggested that the goals of these participants were underscored by values or a sense of “oughtness” (Feather, 1995, p. 1135), thereby differentiating them from the goals held by their lower hope peers. Although this was not a longitudinal study and therefore I did not track the achievements of these individuals over time, I made it a point to offer examples that showed both the action that these higher hope individuals took, as well as the outcomes they reportedly had achieved. In particular, a key strategy used by members of this higher hope group involved formulating back-up plans or alternative ways of proceeding “just in case” their preferred goal met a major obstacle.

One of the criticisms of Snyder’s (1994, 2002) hope model is its strong focus on personal agency (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002). Although the goals outlined in this sub-section may have seemed as if they were being accomplished autonomously, nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, it was clear from speaking with these higher hoppers that they had considerable social resources upon which to draw, in addition to valuable personal characteristics that enabled them to take advantage of those resources. Both of these topics are addressed next.

### ***Theme Four: Drawing on Social and Personal Resources***

The personal and social resources that were at the disposal of the higher hope group were so complexly interwoven that I found it difficult to know which of these topics to present first. Given that it is arguably impossible to definitively articulate the cause and effect relationship between intrapersonal and interpersonal influences, I

decided to review the higher hoppers' social resources first, in order to articulate the contexts in which the later illustrations of character strengths, beliefs, and trust were played out.

### ***Social Resources***

When considering the social resources upon which members of the higher hope group were able to draw, it was not a question of comparing how many friends or family they had in relation to their lower hope peers. The issue was much more complex than that. In the same way that the higher and lower hope participants differed in terms of their perceptions of challenge and adversity, so too did their perspectives about their social resources. For example, recall Lyle, the young man who described himself as being "on his own," and who said he did not have a lot of friends, but still mentioned that there were people he could have turned to for help and advice. He simply chose not to do that, preferring to "make it on my own." That was not the approach taken by members of the higher hope group.

As I analyzed the data for this theme, there appeared to be three different ways in which the higher hope participants utilized social resources that ranged from individual family members and friends to entities such as youth services and other non-profit organizations. These three avenues were:

- 1) Direct help from others, both in terms of practical assistance and being provided with emotional support and encouragement
- 2) Others' influence on their values or overall orientation to life, providing inspiration toward or away from certain ways of thinking and behaving
- 3) Learning from or modeling others, including becoming inspired to set similar goals and take action based on others' successes.

Honora, Hazel, Hector, and Henry provided some illustrative stories.

*Direct help.* Honora had a very close relationship with her mother. She never mentioned her father, but said that her mother had subsequently remarried. Whenever there had been problems at school when she was younger, Honora would tell her mother who would go in and "sort it out." It became clear that Honora depended on her mother to

a large extent. The following story illustrates an example of the social capital that Honora was able to draw on.

Like yesterday I had to take my (GED) test and my mom...I told her, "I've scheduled my test" but I guess she did not imagine it would happen so soon and she had court with her dog. They gave her a fine. She had court and then she had to clean house for a friend whose son was getting married. I did not know about that and I just told her on Monday night, "Well, I have a test in the morning, I gotta go and take my test." And we did not have nobody to watch the kids because she's usually home and she watches the kids. So it's hard, like, "Well, I guess I'll just miss my test, I mean we don't have nobody," and she was, like, "No, you can't miss your test, we'll just figure something out in the morning." It was so hard calling people and I mean it was, like, early, like seven in the morning and she had to be at court by 8:30am and people were sleeping and mom was, like...we thought we couldn't find nobody but my mom's husband, the friend he works with, heard about what we were trying to do and he said, "My wife would watch them, she's home and she only has one kid and I'm sure she won't mind watching them." So we called her and she said, "I'll watch them."

Aside from providing this kind of practical help, the higher hoppers were also able to draw on family members or friends for encouragement and support or even just to discuss their problems. Henry, for example, told me how he liked to "consult people" whenever he had a personal issue he was grappling with, in order to get their perspectives on the matter. Honora talked about how proud her mother had said she was that her daughter had gone back to school to study for her GED. Similarly, Hector's mother was "the main person I go to for, you know, if I want to talk...I can talk to her about it and we help each other get out of it." He described her as "there for me," adding "we do get into arguments at times...but it always gets resolved in the end and we always still hug each other, kiss each other, I love you and stuff like that...we don't hold grudges or anything." As an illustration of Hector's family values he added, "because that's not how we're supposed to be with each other."

Hector also had strong social capital, as illustrated by his awareness of the resources available to him to help pay for his education. His positive experience in having certain expenses paid by the youth services organization through which he also attained his GED, was articulated in the previous section on values, goals, and action.

Similarly, Hazel had also taken full advantage of the resources available to her, given her situation as a single parent. In addition to a \$9,000 scholarship she had earned through working as a teacher's aid, Hazel told me she had never paid for daycare for her daughter while still in high school because "I got companies to pay for her daycare."

Elizabeth: How did you do that?

Hazel: I just go through different public service places, like, I got WorkSource to pay for her daycare when I was in high school and then after I got a job I got WIA which is through Goodwill, Workforce Investment Act that's what it's called...now they pay for her daycare and I think I pay like 30%, but that's not bad at all.

Elizabeth: How do you find out about that?

Hazel: I've always just gone on the Internet or just, like, there's a lot of resources in (this city), you've just go to ask people. Like, I went to the counselor's office in my high school when I was pregnant and told them, "I'm going to have a baby and I don't have money to pay for daycare and I don't have anyone to watch her," and they told me numbers. I called them, I told them what was going on and they said, "Okay, we're going to keep track of your grades, we're going to keep track of your attendance." They always did that and all my grades were fine, my attendance was fine so they kept paying for it all through high school.

One of Hazel's most recent successes was to get a laptop, Internet service, and have her telephone bills paid by a program in exchange for which she had to take 20 hours a month of business classes that she had planned to register for anyway.

Aside from assisting them with their everyday lives through support, encouragement, and providing practical help, these higher hope participants also had developed values based, in part, on the influences of others.

*Influencing values.* While Hazel did not respect her mother, to whom she credited her drive to succeed in order "to spite her," she had been strongly influenced by her maternal grandmother who was "always very good about telling me stuff."

(Once) she made a comment about my house wasn't clean. And every time she made that comment I would always clean, even if I'm, like, really tired, I'll still clean. Like, whenever she's going to come to my house I'll make sure it's very, very clean <laughs>. And just the way she carries herself, too, has taught me a lot about how I should carry myself...not wanting to disappoint her. She was just

disappointed that I did have sex so young and probably who I decided to have sex with me, she was probably disappointed about that. But I've never had any more kids just because I knew that wasn't what she wanted for me.

Honora was similarly influenced by her mother, whom she described as having "raised us good and I want the same for my kids." Having admitted to her daughter that she had also made "a couple of mistakes" in her life, the attitude that Honora's mother took was "you might be a better parent than I was, but I don't want you to be a worse parent than I was." The importance of helping others had been inculcated into Honora at a young age and even though the family was not well-off financially, this seemed to have imbued Honora with a desire to help wherever she could. Like many of the other higher hope women in this study, "helping people" was a key underlying factor and this was true of Honora's career goal to "work with children."

The way Honora raised her children and the sort of people she wanted them to be was influenced also by observing the differences between her own family circumstances and those of her children's father. Honora described her childhood as "happy" and carefree, something that her former partner had not experienced.

Until I met my sons' father and actually seen his life and how people could grow up, I'm like, "God, why do people think like that, why do people do stuff like that, or depend on somebody else to do everything for them?" I've got to see his life and I guess I'll never understand why they think that way because I did not grow up that way...I wasn't growing up with my mom yelling at us or moving us from place to place. And I was, like, "I don't want my kids to grow up the way their father grew up and thinking "Where are they going to stay?" because now I see it does affect when they grow up and they probably live the same lifestyle that their parents did. So I'd rather have a good lifestyle for my kids so they could learn from that and they can relax.

Indeed, modeling or learning from the examples of others was an additional way in which these higher hope individuals positively drew upon their social resources.

*Learning from others.* Hector's help-seeking had been influenced by his mother who was "pretty well informed," and so would get called upon to help other members of the family with "workman's compensation, disability, and papers, getting all the information that involves stuff like that." As such, Hector had learned how to access the

information he needed for himself. In this regard he modeled his mother, but did not rely on her to do things for him.

So if I wanted to know something about anything I take it upon myself to do it. I have never been, you know, like shy or timid or anything like that, ever. I mean, I just try to do it for myself basically, whether getting on the Internet, talking on the phone, talking to people, going there personally, and getting the information for myself...because I know that nobody else is going to be able to do it for me and you know, as I said before, no one's going to be able to make my life easier or anything like that. I don't want to be one of those types of people who, when you see this person, you know they're going to ask you for money or something.

Hector exemplified a common theme running throughout the stories told by the higher hope participants when he related how he was influenced to set goals for himself based on the success of others. Although Hector had little to do with his father's side of the family, there were a couple of cousins who had gone to college, one of them in medical school, who were living what he considered to be successful, "productive" lives. In planning to go to college himself, Hector had asked them "questions like how are their classes, how are the people, just so I can get a feel for that and prepare myself for going to college." In particular, the cousin who was in medical school had spurred Hector on to setting educational and career goals for himself.

Yeah, she's just finished her first year of medical school. I mean, seeing that it can be done...that's the most thing that gets me motivated. Whenever I see people that are successful and that they have done it themselves and gone to school and, you know, they have a good life...that they're stable with their jobs and stuff like that...that's what I strive to get.

Later in the same conversation, Hector articulated how this striving or motivation was based on tangible evidence that he could achieve something similar for his life.

The way I see that anything's possible is by seeing what other people are doing and knowing they are able to do it. Like I said, with my cousins going to college among the few members of my family that have actually done well for themselves...having \$200,000 houses and buying cars and stuff like that so, hey, I know it can be done and from someone that I know their past and what they had to go through growing up with my grandfather being abusive and stuff like that.

So I know that it is possible because, you know, I've seen it with my own eyes and I know that I can do something if not that great then greater...or at least maybe close to it, you know what I'm saying? Really anything is possible just as long as you apply yourself and you make it possible, basically.

### ***Social Resources as the Lifeblood of Hope***

One of the issues that I wanted to emphasize with these examples was the various ways in which hope for the future depended on access to social resources. In concluding this portion, I offer an additional illustration from Henry that demonstrated the importance of social access and experiences for fostering higher levels of hope.

As I articulated in an earlier part of this chapter, when reviewing the more present-time focus of Henry compared with other members of the higher hope group, Henry's hope and social connectedness scores had changed somewhat across the three implementations of these instruments. On the first and third occasions, Henry's hope and social connectedness levels had been high, but at the time of our first interview when I implemented these measures for a second time, his scores had dropped to average. I therefore regarded him to be a naturally hopeful, socially-connected individual who was nevertheless unduly influenced by challenging circumstances. I asked Henry, during one of the cognitive interviews I had conducted with most of the participants, why some of his answers to the instruments had changed from the earlier administration. Some background is necessary here in order to explain this change.

When Henry had originally participated in the group administration of these instruments he had only lived in the area for two months and therefore had few friends in the city. In answering the items at that time, particularly those on the Social Connectedness Scale, Henry "was definitely drawing from my experiences in (previous city)" where he had lived for five years and had many college friends, work colleagues, and other social resources. At the time of our first interview, two months later, the reality of his circumstances had set in and this highly social individual whose "entire life has never been distant from people," had realized that "it was kind of depressing now" to know so few people. Indeed, Henry confessed to feeling "definitely...like an outsider" in this new environment.

When we met for our second interview two months later, Henry's hope and social connectedness had not only increased but had surpassed the original high levels. As appeared to be typical of higher hope individuals, he had rapidly adjusted to the new circumstances in which he had found himself,

Henry: Now I'm here I'm having to change my style which is a good thing, you know. I just go with the punches.

Elizabeth: So you don't feel like an outsider any more?

Henry: No I don't. I feel like I've found my place here. And actually I realize that a lot of me is here, I just got to find the people to plug into, to let my outlet be plugged into <laughs>.

Elizabeth: <referring to his response to an item on the social connectedness measure> But you still "mildly agree" that "I feel distant from people." Any thoughts on that?

Henry: Coming from not being distant to people, being a phone call away, a drive up the highway, you know, comparing that to my situation now, yeah, I feel distant from people because all my co-workers...I'm just getting to know them.

Given the large positive (Cohen, 1988) correlation ( $r = .67, p < .01$ ) between hope and social connectedness that I calculated from participants' scores after the first implementation of these measures, it is perhaps not surprising that in a new environment with few friends, Henry's usually high level of hope would drop to average (although, it should be noted, not to low). His experiences at the time of these interviews provided a valuable illustration of someone who, unlike the other higher hope participants, had recently moved to a different part of the State and therefore had to begin afresh developing the strong social ties that he had always been used to having. Henry's story also reinforced my sense that individuals with higher hope adapted more quickly and positively to new situations than their lower hope counterparts. This appeared, in part, to be a result of an over-abiding belief and trust that life could be successfully navigated, a topic to which I now turn.

### ***Personal Resources***

In conducting these interviews it had become clear to me that the higher hope participants not only differed in the way that they perceived challenge and adversity,



compared with their lower hope peers, but they also exhibited a much more positive orientation to life generally. They also demonstrated many of the personality traits that have been classified by Peterson and Seligman (2004) as *character strengths*. Within those authors' classification system, hope is listed as one of the strengths of transcendence, along with optimism, future-mindedness, and future orientation. As such it is considered to be a separate construct, distinct from the other strengths represented within Peterson and Seligman's (2004) taxonomy. Because I regarded hope to be largely a process and not an outcome, it seemed salient to consider the other character strengths that were evidenced in the interviews I conducted with these higher hope participants, that were absent from those of their lower hope peers. Certainly, with the increasing interest in what has been called *character education*, an issue that I will discuss in the section on practical applications of this hope process model in Chapter Six, I considered it important to review some of these other strengths under the personal resources section of my model.

Since many of these strengths have, I believe, been touched upon in earlier illustrations, including effort, perseverance, interest, openness to experience, social intelligence, and future orientation, I begin this portion with brief examples representing each of the six categories of strengths identified by Peterson and Seligman (2004) that have not been mentioned previously, namely:

- Wisdom and Knowledge: Perspective-taking
- Courage: Bravery
- Humanity: Social, emotional, and personal intelligences
- Justice: Social responsibility
- Temperance: Self-regulation
- Transcendence: Spirituality

The explication of the spiritual perspectives of these higher hope participants will also serve as a means by which I will introduce the topics of belief and trust that will conclude this section.

*Strengths of wisdom and knowledge: perspective-taking.* According to Peterson and Seligman (2004), wisdom is “a type of intelligence” that has little to do with IQ or academic ability. These authors cite Sternberg (1998) who similarly defined wisdom as a “practical intelligence” (Peterson and Seligman, 2004, p. 39) that balances self-interest with the interests of others. Peterson and Seligman (2004) have suggested that wisdom may be connected with “living with hardship, emerging a better person able to share what has been learned with others,” (p. 39). Nevertheless, if the harsh context of one’s life was the principal reason for acquiring wisdom, then that did not explain why this characteristic was evident only among the higher hope participants and not their lower hope peers, given that all had faced some form of “hardship” in their young lives. Instead, I believe it is a person’s social connectedness that contributes to this wisdom, as will be illustrated shortly with a story from Helen.

Having already offered examples of the strengths of creativity (in terms of determining alternative avenues for achieving their goals), curiosity (as shown by the many interests held by the higher hope participants), open-mindedness and the associated love of learning new things, I now address the fifth “cognitive strength” that Peterson and Seligman (2004) list under “wisdom and knowledge,” i.e., *perspective*. These authors define perspective as “the ability to take stock of life in large terms,” thereby enabling the individual “to listen to others, to evaluate what they say, and then to offer good (sage) advice” (p. 106). In the following example related by Helen, a conversation with a close friend resulted in her taking her own “advice.”

Woven throughout the stories that the higher hope participants told, these more socially connected individuals demonstrated that rather than remain engrossed in their own issues to the exclusion of everyone else, they appreciated and made allowances for the perspectives of others. Helen provided one such example when she told me about an argument she recently had with her 18-year old sister.

Helen’s parents had been out of town, leaving Helen living at home with her son Brad, and her younger sister. The two women got into a “fight” during which the sister had said she would no longer help Helen look after Brad, including picking him up from

school on days when Helen was in class. The following day Helen left work as usual to go to school and take one of two final exams. Mid-way through that test, Helen realized that she did not know whether her sister had indeed collected Brad from school. She quickly completed the final paper, tried to contact her sister on her cell phone and when she got no response began “freaking out.” Helen discovered that her sister had not met Brad from school, at which she told me “I wanted to be mad at her and I wanted to be mad at the world.” What Helen did, however, was to go over to a friend’s house to talk about what had happened.

I feel like I handled it really poorly...you know I did not cuss her out or anything. I still haven’t talked to her but...you know, I feel that I can be positive...like, I went over to my friend’s house and we kind of talked about it and I saw where my sister was coming from. From the things that I said, she wasn’t going to help me...and so I can take that for what it is, even though it was a really difficult time and it was really stressful...so I think I am able to think through things and not be so one-sided. So it’s easier for me to see both sides and be kind of positive about the situation...like, it’s kind of a learning experience instead of just, like, “Why does this always happen to me?” or, “I’m the only person that this ever happens to, poor me!” So I think that I’m able to do that pretty well.

What this indicated was that Helen’s openness to her sister’s perspective “and not be so one-sided,” was facilitated by talking through the situation with a close friend. She additionally demonstrated that she could appreciate that she was not the only person that such things happened to and to learn from that experience that, according to Peterson and Seligman (2004), contributed to the acquisition of wisdom and knowledge. In similar respects, it was their higher levels of social connectedness that also appeared to facilitate many of the other character strengths illustrated in the stories offered by this higher hope cohort.

*Strengths of courage: bravery.* We have already gained an appreciation from within the higher hope participants’ stories of the persistence, integrity (authenticity, honesty), and vitality (enthusiasm, energy), that Peterson and Seligman (2004) have categorized under “strengths of courage.” The fourth strength in this category is bravery, a quality that was also evidenced throughout the higher hope interviews. Peterson and

Seligman (2004) define bravery as, “the ability to do what needs to be done despite fear,” and “doing the unpopular but correct thing.” This included “resisting peer pressure regarding a morally questionable shortcut” (p. 199). Hector provided a typical example of rejecting such “peer pressure.”

As I recounted earlier, Hector’s father had been imprisoned for eight years, possibly for drug-related offenses, although Hector did not wish to elaborate on the cause. The father was not the only person in Hector’s family who had either been in contact with the criminal justice system or had done jail time. Nevertheless, Hector was determined not to become “sidetracked by my family,” and “get into trouble for doing whatever that we’re doing.” Not only did Hector not want that life for himself, but he continually emphasized that he wanted to “become a better, productive person for society basically.” Similar to Helen’s perspective-taking, Hector said he would “always try to put myself in someone else’s shoes and see how they feel.” As such, Hector had considered the consequences of hanging around with an uncle whose tendency was to get involved with “drinking and, you know, stuff that really was not good for me and getting into bad situations.” The young man determined it was time to “grow up and do something different,” and “start going on what at least I think is a better path.”

The path that Hector had decided upon included resisting such peer pressure from members of his family even though he admitted “it’s hard because they are, you know, my family and I do want to visit them.” However, “when situations arise I don’t allow myself to get involved.” This, arguably, took considerable bravery on Hector’s part in terms of actively rejecting a lifestyle that appeared so natural and easy to other men in his family.

Again, social influences appeared to play a key role in Hector’s decision to turn his back on the life of drugs and crime exemplified by many family members, including his father. What perhaps facilitated Hector’s “bravery” in terms of deciding to pursue a pro-social role in society that included going to college, getting a good job, and “making some good money,” were the positive role models provided to him by cousins “that are successful” and “have a good life.” As Hector had expressed in an earlier quote, “I know

that it is possible because, you know, I've seen it for my own eyes." This direct evidence of the success Hector could similarly enjoy through effort and application had provided him with the motivation to "get real far or get ahead in life." As such, he had turned his back on the arguably easier route of selling drugs or getting involved in other types of crime in order to achieve the "financial stability" he desired. Had Hector not had access to the positive role models within his own family, to whom he saw himself as similar, it might have taken considerably more courage on his part or have been much more difficult to turn his back on the more typical life of crime practiced by others in his milieu.

Additionally, Hector's inclination to be future-time orientated that involved thinking about and possibly visualizing the potential consequences of illegal activities, combined with his values concerning living life comfortably and "feeling good in my life," appeared also to contribute toward the self-restraint involved in making pro-social choices.

*Strengths of humanity: social, emotional, and personal intelligences.* Throughout my conversations with the higher hope participants, I was left with the impression that most of them were smarter about navigating their lives, beyond academic ability and success, than their lower hope peers. This was certainly true with respect to learning quickly from their mistakes. They were still fallible human beings, however, as illustrated by Helen failing to check that her sister would continue to pick up her son from school despite having said she was never going to help her out again. Nevertheless, "once bitten, twice shy" appeared to apply to most members of the higher hope group.

Data gathered from the majority of the higher hope contingent suggested that they accessed the social, personal, and emotional intelligences that Peterson and Seligman (2004) considered to represent "strengths of humanity," along with love and kindness.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) concur that there is considerable conceptual overlap between these three forms of intelligence, namely: social, emotional, and personal. However, they differentiated them by positing that emotional intelligence "concerns the ability to use emotional information in reasoning," personal intelligence

“involves accurate self-understanding and self-assessment, including the ability to reason about internal motivational, emotional, and, more generally, dynamic processes,” while social intelligence is focused on “social relationships involved in intimacy and trust,” as well as other types of interpersonal relationships (p. 339). All of the higher hope participants interviewed for this study demonstrated one or more of these forms of intelligence, but Harmony offered a particularly good example of how all three were intricately connected with her career choices.

Harmony’s decision to become a police officer had been formulated “since I was, like, in middle school and they haven’t changed my mind since then.” She had discovered this passion in 7<sup>th</sup> grade during a class project in which the students were presented with a “whodunit.” Harmony discovered, from that experience, how much she enjoyed “solving crime,” and she made frequent use of the phrase “I liked it a lot,” when recounting that memory. This contrasted with her overall assessment of high school as “it wasn’t for me,” largely because of the “boring teachers that would just talk and talk,” and who failed to make learning interesting for her. In keeping with the “emotion as information” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 340) model that underpins the concept of emotional intelligence, Harmony considered this rare, positive emotional experience in school as indicating that she should pursue police work as a career.

With that career goal in mind, Harmony had taken various steps to discover what she needed to do to become a police officer. The more she found out about the work, the more she had become convinced this was what her “inner self really wanted to do.” The work seemed interesting, she wasn’t fazed by the potential dangers, and after telling me about arranging “to do a rider log,” involving going out in a patrol car with a police officer for a day, Harmony admitted she “loved the speed” and the idea of legally going fast. The underlying motivation for this career choice, however, was Harmony’s desire to help others. She repeatedly emphasized how her “purpose in life is to help as many people as I can,” and that when it came to “changing people’s lives, I love it.” In addition to the strong emotional connection with police work, Harmony appeared to have a clear

understanding, or *personal intelligence*, concerning what was important to her “inner self,” and thus what motivated her to make this career decision.

With respect to *social intelligence*, Thorndike (1920, cited in Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 340) defined this as the ability “to act wisely in human relations.” Harmony certainly appeared to have made a wise choice in her husband, a man whom she described as her main support.

He’s the one that actually is saying, “Well you want to do it, go ahead, do it.” He’s really supporting what I want to do. He’s open to whatever I want to do. If I tell him, you know, I don’t want to be that, he’s more than willing to open his mind and back up and...be there for me.

No other member of Harmony’s family had ever given her that kind of validation. Harmony no longer saw much of her father who lived in the same city, and she talked about the difficult relationship she had with her mother who lived in another State. In particular, Harmony “wasn’t connected with my mom...we were always back and forth. She would put me down on some occasions,” so that they “did not have a good relationship,” although that had improved since Harmony had become a mother herself.

Despite Harmony describing how becoming a police officer was her “dream job” and of great importance to fulfilling her need to “help as many people as I can,” she told me that “my priority is my little girl.” Having developed social intelligence, said to include, “the ability to predict what will happen in an interpersonal situation” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 341), Harmony was not willing to neglect her baby daughter’s needs, given that her own needs had been largely neglected by her absent mother.

My priority is my little girl. So the police pays really good to get her through what I want to get her through. But if it’s taking away from my time with her...if it’s affecting our relationship, because I know I did not have that with my mom, of course I’m not going to continue it.

For that reason, Harmony had formulated back-up plans of potentially working as a doctor’s assistant or for the ambulance service, as related previously.

Extrapolating from this data, I would argue that Harmony demonstrated the various kinds of intelligences that Peterson and Seligman (2004) categorized under “strengths of humanity.” She had used her emotional connection with solving crime in a 7<sup>th</sup> grade class as information concerning a potential future career (i.e., emotional intelligence). She clearly understood herself, particularly the motivation to help others (i.e., personal intelligence), and had formulated other career outlets for that motivation given the paramount goal of maintaining a strong bond with her daughter (i.e., social intelligence.)

*Strengths of justice: citizenship and social responsibility.* The character strength of social responsibility, defined by Peterson and Seligman (2004) as “an orientation to help others” that has an “altruistic tone” (p. 371), is particularly interesting in that it helped me better understand an issue that differentiated the genders with respect to hope. I offer some background on this issue first, in order to clarify the argument I am making, and then use several of the higher hope participants’ data to illustrate this particular point.

As Curry and colleagues have articulated, many studies using thousands of participants have found no statistically significant differences in the hope scores of male and female participants (Curry et al., 1997). Averill et al. (1990) reported similarly. This lack of gender differences concerning hope is consistent with the *gender similarities hypothesis* suggesting that “males and females are alike on most...psychological variables” (Hyde, 2005, p. 590). The similarity of hope scores between genders, however, ignores the issue of whether the hoped-for goals are the same for both of these groups (Snyder, 1994, p. 66). In various studies with adolescents, for example, Carroll (2002) found that the normative goals that males considered to be important were different to those of their female peers. One of the benefits of conducting a largely qualitative study was that I was able to gather data to help clarify the gender differences issue with respect to hoped-for goals.

The “strengths of justice” articulated by Peterson and Seligman (2004) included citizenship, the topic of this sub-section, along with fairness and leadership. Citizenship is defined by these authors as “a sense of obligation to the common good,” that spans



from the micro level (i.e., family and close friends), to the macro level (i.e., one's ethnic group or human beings in general). These two extremes differentiated the higher hope men and women in this study, a finding that was supported within the hold-out data presented in Chapter Five. For example, when I asked them what was important, the two male participants Henry and Hector said that they were focused largely on financial security. Henry was working for a financial services company because he was interested in "understanding how money can make money." His long-term goals included owning a house, a Lexus car, and being financially secure so that he could help pay off his parents' debts and put his children through college. Financial security was also important to Hector who similarly wanted to "live comfortably," by working at a well-paying job so that he could be debt-free and have money to give to his friends and family. Hence, Henry and Hector's interest in money involved altruistically sharing their good fortune with their loved ones, i.e., citizenship at the micro level.

The desire for material possessions was also apparent in the responses from the higher hope female participants. They, too, wanted to own their homes rather than be renting or living with their parents for much longer. Hazel, for example, articulated how she had always "wanted stuff," and was thus motivated to find ways of acquiring computer equipment, a car, and other home amenities. Their responses to what was important to them in life was qualitatively different to those of their male counterparts, however. In contrast to the two men, all five of these higher hope women sought careers in the helping professions. As illustrated earlier, Harmony's various career choices were focused on her "purpose" to help as many people as she could. Helen was leaning toward a nursing career in the field of gynecology in order to work with young girls and help them avoid single parenthood or practice safe sex. Honora wanted to work with disadvantaged children, Hazel for non-profit organizations, and Hilary to eventually direct her own program offering services to individuals with incarcerated loved-ones. In that regard, it appeared that their citizenship was largely focused at the macro level.

Originally, I had thought that the higher hope male participants were simply extrinsically motivated compared with their largely intrinsically motivated female

counterparts. This would have been a troubling finding, however, in light of numerous studies suggesting that the persistence and greater effort associated with higher hope were more associated with intrinsic motivation than extrinsic motivation. Viewed through the lens of social responsibility as defined by Peterson and Seligman (2004), however, it appeared that both genders shared this character strength, only at different levels of focus.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the different gender expectations that persist even today, the male participants were focused on social responsibility at the level of their immediate family, while the female participants held a broader sense of responsibility to humankind generally.

*Strengths of temperance: self-regulation.* This penultimate category of strengths outlined by Peterson and Seligman (2004) comprised forgiveness and mercy, humility and modesty, prudence, and self-regulation. It is the latter topic of self-regulation that serves as the focus for this sub-section.

Much has been written about the importance of self-regulation with respect to educational motivation. Zimmerman (1989, cited in Pintrich & Schunk, 2002) defined self-regulation as a process through which “students activate and sustain cognitions, behaviors, and affects that are systematically oriented toward the attainment of their goals” (p. 176). Pintrich and Schunk (2002) articulated the difference between self-regulation and motivation in terms of personal choice. While motivation does not necessarily depend on personal choice, according to Pintrich and Schunk (2002), it is a criteria for determining self-regulation. These authors noted that in Zimmerman’s conceptual framework, self-regulation comprised of many “subprocesses” (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002, p. 177), and said that “as long as not all task aspects are externally controlled, we can speak of self-regulation.” Similarly, Peterson and Seligman (2004) included self-regulation within the category of *strengths of temperance*, pointing to the direction of “self-regulatory efforts...to obtain or maintain control over thoughts and emotions” (p. 501).

A more detailed exposition of the various theories implicated in self-regulation is outside the remit of this dissertation, (see Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Pintrich & Schunk,

2002). The relationship between self-regulation and emotion control, however, is one that is pertinent to hope and was illustrated throughout the data collected from the higher hope participants. Hector and Harmony are offered as illustrative examples.

It appeared throughout these data that the higher hope individuals had a particular aversion for negative affect. They talked not only about disliking feeling “bad” in their own lives, but also how they abhorred seeing others succumb to negativity. One of the strategies that the higher hoppers used to improve their feelings during times of challenge and uncertainty was positive self-talk. That is, they were largely successful in controlling their emotional response to difficult circumstances by ensuring that the “voices” in their heads were positive and uplifting.

There were two ways in which Harmony demonstrated positive self-talk. First, unlike her lower hope peers who focused frequently on what they were not good at, Harmony continually spoke highly of herself. She referred to herself as “a very good advisor,” and said that this “is one of the skills I have.” There was no tendency during our discussion to downplay her abilities or speak badly about herself. Second, Harmony maintained that it was always possible to change one’s thoughts as it simply required taking control of one’s mind.

Everybody, I assume, has that little voice that says, “You can’t do this,” that constant voice that will bring you down, that’ll tell you, “You know what, you are this or that, look at yourself.” But it’s also the way of shutting down that little voice and saying, “You know, I’m not...and I’m going to make it, I’m going to do this. I can do this.” I don’t know...if a person just sits down and just relaxes and says, “You know what, I can do this,” that little voice just kind of disappears for a while and you start doing positive things and thinking the way you want to think. I mean, I don’t think your mind can have control over you, you have to have control over your mind and it’s just about shutting down that little voice and saying, “I can and I will.” It’s just going through that and then I guess everything just takes place and comes into place after that. It’s just knowing how to control your mind and knowing how to say, “You know what, I’m in charge here, nobody else is.”

As with many of these strategies, this ability to control her mental state was acquired through Harmony’s relationships with “the people that were around me and the

situations that I had to go through.” In modeling others who similarly refused to give in to negative thoughts and feelings, Harmony had mastered the ability to control that “little voice,” that had the potential to be her friend or her enemy.

Henry was similarly able in that regard. Like Harmony, Henry appreciated many of the qualities he had, including “that I’m a social person, I’m happy most of the time, and I feel good about my situation. I like to laugh, I appreciate that I’m happy-go-lucky, that’s an attitude I’ve been blessed with.” He was clearly confident in himself, telling me that “I’m a leader, I’m good with words, I’m good with people,” and that “I’m a good worker and people like me.” In terms of controlling his emotions, Henry was realistic in realizing that negativity was a “natural” part of life but said that he chose not to let that take him over because “I prefer to be triumphant.”

Nevertheless, there were times when Henry also got depressed about life “because I feel like I don’t have any control over it.” On those occasions he would “counsel” himself, reminding himself that “even though I may not be in complete control of my destiny, or what I’m supposed to do, who I’m supposed to be,” he understood “that I can still dream and think and look at where it is and what direction I want to go to and achieve it by beginning with the end in mind.” As articulated in an earlier part of this section, however, Henry did not always follow through on this advice. What sustained him, nevertheless, was a general outlook that told him that “everything’s going to work out.” This overall belief and trust in life is the subject of the last category of strengths featured in this section namely, *spirituality*.

*Strengths of transcendence: spirituality.* This final category of strengths within Peterson and Seligman’s (2004) taxonomy included an appreciation of beauty, gratitude, hope, and humor, the last of which has already been addressed with respect to my observation that the members of the higher hope group tended to laugh more during these one-on-one interviews than their lower hope peers. It is the fifth strength that Peterson and Seligman (2004) labeled “spirituality” that is the topic of this portion, however.

Within the classification of spirituality, Peterson and Seligman (2004) included *religiousness, faith, and purpose*. Essentially, they considered this set of strengths to

represent “coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe and one’s place within it” (p. 533). Certainly, there was a striking difference in that regard between the higher hope group and their lower hope counterparts. Henry and Hilary are used to illustrate that difference.

As can be seen from the table of demographic data (Table 4.2 on page 124), three of the higher hope participants (Hector, Hilary, and Helen) indicated that they were “spiritual but not religious,” three others named specific faiths (Henry, non-denominational; Honora, Pentecostal; Harmony, Catholic), and only Hazel indicated that she had no particular religious views. The members of the lower hope and “changer” groups outlined in Table 4.1 on page 94, comprised two atheist/agnostics (Lacey and Lyle), one Catholic (Loretta), one Mormon (Chuck), one non-denominational (Lorne), and one “spiritual but not religious” (Chantal).

Both Henry who had been raised a Catholic, and Hilary who was raised in a “religious” but non-denominational family, made frequent references to God in their interviews. Their respective faiths strongly contributed to their overall belief and trust in the world as a “good” place. They believed that they had a purpose to fulfill, although there was considerable variation in how well they were able to articulate what that purpose was.

In the essay he had composed at the time of the group implementation of measures, Henry had written about “kingdom purpose.” At our first interview I asked him to explain what he meant by that. He articulated that it was what “God needs you to do in order to help others,” and could be as simple as managing a fast-food outlet and treating the employees well. Henry was unsure of what his own “kingdom purpose” was, although this was a topic of considerable concern to him and one he liked to discuss often with friends and people he encountered through his church. He thought it might be connected with his ability to pick up any instrument and play it without prior instruction.

God gave me this talent for some reason to use for His bigger picture. He gave me...He made me charming, He made me likeable, and He gave me a sense of friendship and camaraderie that’s easily created and fostered. I don’t know if He

wants me to sell, but He wants me to be an advocate for what He would like for me to do, because I'm good at public speaking and I have a good voice.

Being able to list these "God-given" attributes, however, had not helped Henry identify what his purpose in life might be. Regardless, Henry believed that "everything will work out," because "I have a lot of experiences that way," and added that it was this thought that "really keeps me alive."

Hilary was somewhat clearer on what she was meant to do, although she did not specifically attribute that purpose to serving God. She believed that "everybody is put on the Earth for a reason," and that "a lot of people live looking for their purpose." In terms of finding a meaning for her own life, Hilary "definitely" thought that her purpose was to "help people find their purpose and show that love is possible," regardless of the circumstances in which they found themselves.

Hilary's strong sense of meaning and purpose, indeed *trust* in the goodness of life appeared to imbue her with an ability to transcend the pain and challenge she had repeatedly faced, particularly in connection with her fiancé's imprisonment shortly after finding herself pregnant. For example, she reconciled his eight-year jail sentence with the belief that "it's all on God's time."

There are days when I'm like, "Oh my gosh, can this just be over?" and I want him to be home. And then there are days when I'm like, "No, we're not ready yet." That's hard but it's something that we definitely deal with and it's more comfortable when he (her fiancé) says it too. I would prefer for him to come home, even if it takes a long time, but it be right and him be where he needs to be, than him come home prematurely.

Interestingly, there was a religious connotation around hope for both Henry and Hilary as each considered hope and faith to be synonymous. As Henry expressed it, "hope is faith that God will make something happen for you," although that did not absolve Henry from taking action in control of his life. Ultimately, however, Henry believed that "God would never put me in a position to harm me. He's always going to help me as long as I seek Him and obey Him. Those are two key things." Nevertheless,

Henry found it easier to maintain a positive belief and trust in life because of the positive state he associated with hope.

When I feel hope I'm in the best of moods. People ask me if I'm drunk because I'm so happy. I guess I'm drunk with happiness. The possibility of it puts me in a very comfortable place, gives me confidence. I trust myself more probably...I can feel the energy, you know? I feel better about the decisions that I've made with respect to the changes I've made in my life. Particularly the ones that were a little more selfless in essence. Oh yeah, man. You should see me...I'm the happiest guy in the world.

Hilary also strongly believed in the "possibility" of hope that helped her "know that there is going to be something better." Again, however, hope was active rather than passive.

I definitely do not think it's something that you can just sit and it just comes to you. I always tell this to people that want opportunity to knock at their door and it doesn't happen. It's like...there is definitely steps and I believe the first step is self-evaluation and finding out what you actually believe in, why you believe those things, how those things have impacted your life, and whether or not they have taken you somewhere positive or negative.

Hilary followed this by relating a conversation she had with a woman friend who believed her promiscuity wasn't any cause for concern but was, nevertheless, worried about her health.

I could see hope in her concern for her health and it was, like, you really like this activity (sex) a lot but then you also think about it in another term which is your health. I would advise you to sit down and think about how necessary it is for you and, like, if it's worth your health and the consequences and things like that. I think that's the first step toward having hope; that things will change.

Hope "empowered" Hilary in the way that it energized Henry. It was because of this personal realization that Hilary had determined one day to direct a program that would extend hope to those who had limited or negative expectations for their future.

I remember (times when) I did not have any hope for myself, I did not really have anything. You know, I did not have expectations...I was just...it was an attitude

of “Tomorrow isn’t promised.” And it’s a pretty common attitude I hear in a lot of people who have it, like, you live each day like it’s your last basically. And I think that if more people who are hopeful and they hope for tomorrow <laughs>, starting with something as simple as “Tomorrow is something that we do have,” it might give an extension (of hope) to somebody who might not necessarily have it. Because, wow, “isn’t promised” isn’t the best attitude to have if you’re trying to go somewhere in life.

In common with other members of this higher hope cohort, both Henry and Hilary had a strong sense of “destiny.” When Henry applied for but failed to get a much-coveted job with a national non-profit organization, he rationalized this “failure” as “I guess it wasn’t in my destiny.” Similarly, Hilary told a story about receiving an electricity bill just before a planned visit to her jailed fiancé whom she had not seen in many months. Hilary was unable to make the trip since she could not afford to pay both the bill and buy the gas needed for the long car journey. She considered that to be “divine intervention,” insomuch as “if I’d come back and then seen the electricity bill the money would have already been spent and I would have been without lights. So, you know, it might not have been what I planned for, but it was definitely what I needed.” This tendency toward finding benefit, whether “divine intervention” or otherwise, is a topic that was common to all of the higher hope participants and will be further explored in the fifth theme that concludes this chapter.

#### ***Summary of Theme Four***

Contemporary psychologists now consider hope not only to be a multidimensional construct but that the word itself is a “shorthand term” for a multiplicity of other constructs (Elliott & Olver, 2002, p. 190) I have attempted to identify many of these within the categorization of character strengths postulated by Peterson and Seligman (2004). While some of these strengths, particularly those involving multiple intelligences, were not consistently illustrated by all of the higher hope participants, nevertheless there was sufficient evidence within these data that such strengths were an important differentiating factor between the higher and lower hope groups.

The second way that the lives of the higher hope participants differed from those of their lower hope peers was again related to the issue of social connectedness. This was



not associated with how many friends they had, necessarily, or the size of their family, but the extent to which the higher hope contingent reached out to others to discuss their problems, formulate fresh perspectives, elicit practical help, and draw inspiration from others' successes. In that regard these data provided support for the more socially-determined nature of hope articulated in the philosophical literature, than the agency-focused hope typically proffered by western psychologists.

### ***Theme Five: Openness and Flexibility about Outcomes***

There are generally three potential outcomes of goals. The first is that the original goal is successfully attained, the second is that only some aspect of the goal is accomplished, and the third is that the attempt fails altogether. As articulated in Theme Three, the higher hope participants increased their chances of fulfilling important but uncertain goals by formulating back-up plans or alternative ways of proceeding. The idea behind that strategy was that, having a realistic appreciation of the vicissitudes of life, they could transfer their efforts to another option if the first approach turned out to be a dead-end.

This had implications for maintaining positive emotions. For Harmony, for example, the disappointment of failing to become a police officer could be mitigated by directing her desire to help people within other professions, such as nursing or the ambulance service. The higher hope participants additionally used other, more cerebral strategies to help them be successful and feel more positive affect. They either a) changed the original goal, or b) found benefit in whatever outcome they did experience. In short, the higher hopers combined their efforts in goal pursuit with an openness and flexibility about those outcomes that was not demonstrated by their lower hope peers.

### ***Changing the Original Goal***

It was perhaps not surprising that Helen would quickly come to terms with losing out on the “fairytale ending” that typified her parents' courtship and marriage. She had never thought that teenage pregnancy happened to girls like her, only to “dumb” kids from the wrong side of town. Having perceived herself as “too smart for this, too good

for this,” Helen soon had to change her perspective. Indeed, having a range of experiences seemed to help Helen in this regard. For example, having once thought that she “did not like old people,” and that she would not want to work with them, “after talking with many of them, even in the restaurant industry or just meeting them, like, these people are so interesting.”

When I first interviewed Helen she appeared to regret not having the opportunity, as her parents had, of walking off into the sunset with her dream partner. She said it had been almost “bred into me...to get married, to have kids, you live in the suburbs, you work this job and there was no variation from that.” In particular, Helen had been brought up to want a husband whom she could rely on. In the milieu that she had inhabited prior to becoming a teen parent, she had never been exposed to women who were making it on their own, including bringing up children single-handedly. Barely a month later, during our second interview, Helen revealed that she had met a woman at a community event “and it was her and her three kids and she was talking about how she was just living her life and they’re just doing it on their own.” That appeared to influence Helen to reframe the “happy-ever-after” marriage goal that she had long-held but now accepted as lost, with one that celebrated her independence.

Helen: I think I realized...I think I can do it on my own.

Elizabeth: Because you’re seeing examples of women who are making it?

Helen: Yeah. And I admire those women. Like, I think I used to feel sorry for them. Like, “Oh, you’re a single woman, wow, that sucks,” or “That’s hard.” But now it’s kind of...I see a lot of single moms, especially in our program, and I’m, like, “Wow that’s impressive.” We’ve got a girl in our program who had twins and she’s 15 and she’s a single mom, doing it completely on her own, she doesn’t have any government assistance or anything. Like, I wouldn’t say I want her life or that what she’s doing is some good thing. But she’s surviving and I admire that and I think it’s a good card to have, being on your own and making it.

In this example, therefore, Helen was able to maintain a positive perspective on her situation by letting go of a goal that depended on being with a husband, and substituting that with one that celebrated independence.

One theme common to all of these effortful higher hope participants involved changing their focus from the outcome to the process. When relating how they felt about past or future failures, they said that they were satisfied with “having tried.” For example, Hector echoed the typical higher hope refrain that he believed things would always get better and that even if they did not “it’s fine, just as long as I tried, you know?” For Harmony, there was “no harm in trying” and being open to pursuing your dreams. In that regard, these individuals were able to take comfort from changing the goal to having expended effort, even if they did not achieve the anticipated outcome. This attitude is closely tied to the cognitive, emotional, and motivational strategy that is illustrated next, benefit-finding.

### ***Benefit-Finding***

Benefit-finding is an area of study associated with psychiatrists Howard Tennen and Glenn Affleck, whose research into individuals who faced adversity indicated that many found “benefits in their negative experiences” (Tennen & Affleck, 2005, p. 584). As has been emphasized in several parts of this chapter, the higher hope participants found benefit in adversity by maintaining the belief that things always work out for the best and that everything happens for a reason. They also appeared to have a greater inclination to be thankful for the smallest things. Hilary, for example, upon discovering that the back seat of her new car had its own cup holder immediately felt joyful and thought “things are getting so much better and I don’t even expect them. Everyday, seeing something like this in addition to something I already had keeps me, like <laughs> ‘things are going to get better.’” Paradoxically, the greater the pain the more the members of this higher hope cohort associated that with benefits. According to Hilary:

It’s a lot of pain (having her fiancé in prison) and it really gets to my confidence. But the pain puts more faith in me. It makes me strive harder to do something with myself to, like, overcome all of the statistics and all of what has happened in the past and what I’m using to seeing. Because I’m not going to be in it forever.

Similarly, Harmony articulated the benefits that came from the struggles in her life.

Like I said, a relationship is not always going to be roses. I know with my husband I had to go through fights as well, relationship things to make our relationship stronger. So that's how it all falls into place.

Even after having experienced her parents' divorce at a young age, being separated from her mother and sister, suffering from bulimia for years, and having dropped out of high school when she became pregnant, Harmony was able to maintain a positive perspective on life.

I know my life did not turn out the way I wanted it to. Like I said, being a parent and all that...if I would have taken different roads. But it's for the better. Like I said, for me it turned out better. I have somebody that's there for me now (her husband), so I can say for me things will always turn out for the better.

This appeared to be one area in which being socially influenced by others did not hold sway over the individual's own definition of a "benefit," however.

Honora: When I found out I was pregnant I was upset, like sad. And she (her mother) was, like, "God did it for a reason. I mean, he wouldn't give you another kid, this is a blessing, you must have did something good to have another kid," and I was like, "Another kid?" <laughs>. But I really never put things that way but my mom has. Like I've always grown up with her saying it happens for a reason. To probably learn a lesson, or something better's coming or something but...

Elizabeth: You don't necessarily share that point of view?

Honora: No.

### *Hopers on Hope*

I conclude this chapter by outlining some of the definitions of hope elicited from the higher hope cohort, comparing them with one participant from each of the lower hope and "changer" groups. I believe these explications not only emphasized the different relationships that each group had with change, but illustrated the more positive, open, and flexible orientations to life of the higher hope group. Yet this orientation is not so open that the higher hopers were unable to maintain some semblance of control of their lives, in part because of their thoughts and behaviors, and in part because of their social connectedness.

**Table 4.3 Definitions of Hope Across Groups**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Definition of Hope</b>
Higher	Honora	Hope is, like, looking forward to something, like, not knowing what the situation is, like, not knowing whether it's going to be a "no" or a "yes," but hoping for the best.
Higher	Harmony	To some people that really don't have that much hope it's because they have let people put them down, they have let their own thoughts bring them down. They haven't really took control of what's going to happen in their life or thought to themselves, "I did this, I have this to offer the world."
Higher	Helen	I think one of the main things (about hope) would be stability and how much they feel they control their own lives or how much they feel like the world is against them or they have been dealt the wrong hand. I think stability really plays a huge role in that. I feel that I can control my life because I have stability due to other people. Even though I say I don't want to rely on other people and that I'm so independent, but really my parents provide the stability.
Changer	Chantal	Just hoping that everything stays steady, that's pretty much how I see hope. I'm hoping that nothing goes wrong or something and that's something that I can't really take too much action in. It's just I am hoping things stay the way that they are.
Lower	Lacey	Lacey: (Hope is) I guess a dark room with a door open and there's like going through the door...it's cracked open. Elizabeth: What's through there? Lacey: Well, you don't really know yet.

***Summary of Chapter Four***

In this chapter I have provided considerable data gathered from 13 participants of both genders, different ethnicities, socio-economic statuses, and life circumstances to illustrate five themes that appeared to best represent the process of hope. Additionally, these data suggested an orientation toward change, difficulty, and uncertainty that was largely positive and sought to articulate benefits rather than disadvantage and loss. As such, I was able to develop a model of hope that demonstrated its multidimensional, volitional nature affecting cognitions, emotions, motivation, and behavior. Higher levels of hope appeared to enable an individual to maintain a sense of control over their circumstances thereby tipping the emotional balance away from fear and more toward positive affect, as well as providing the energy needed to maintain effortful progress in goal pursuit. The higher hope participants were thus not only more successful in changing their lives, but they became changed also.

In contrast to the literature that equates hope with coping (Lazarus, 1999), or considers it synonymous with optimism (Tiger, 1979), I concur with Peterson and Seligman's (2004) classification of hope as "transcendent." These higher hoppers did not merely face up to and try to overcome their difficulties, they became different and arguably better people because of them. Indeed, they were so oriented toward believing that things always happened for the best that they altered their perceptions to fit the prevailing circumstances. If a hoped-for outcome was not achieved, then they simply changed the goal or mined the circumstances for some form of benefit. In that regard they transformed a situation in which they had originally little control to one in which they retained a sense of mastery over their lives.

This model will now be explained in more detail in the next chapter, in which I report how I tested its veracity against a "hold-out" sample of three higher hope participants from a separate field site.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THEORETICAL MODEL

I believed it to be important for the generalizability of the emergent model to test it against a separate sample of participants. I therefore selected to interview three individuals with some of the highest hope scores from a “hold-out” group of students. These individuals had attended a mainstream high school with a similar population to that of the main sample. In common with the majority of the higher hoppers from the main sample, each of these test participants had graduated from high school on time, but they differed in the respect that none of the three had children. At the time of our interview, each had completed their first semester at different colleges. They were all 18 years of age: one Hispanic male, one Hispanic female, and one White male, to whom I gave the pseudonyms Troy, Tomas, and Tamara.

I begin this chapter by explaining the theoretical model that emerged from the data supplied by the 13 main study participants, as illustrated in Figure 4 on page 186. This model is entitled *Hope as a Process and an Orientation to Change, Difficulty, and Uncertainty*. In order to provide relevant visual detail in relation to the text, each stage of the model is depicted individually within the section in which it is described. These individual illustrations relate only to the model’s inner circle. The three factors outlined in the outer circle, that is: issues of control, emotion/affect, and action, are not shown in the illustrations but are discussed within the text itself.

Having described the model in full, I then turn to the three test cases. Each of the sections related to Troy, Tomas, and Tamara begins with a brief biographical outline. These stories provide the context for understanding how and why the process and orientation of hope was salient in their lives. I follow these biographical outlines with illustrative examples from each of their lives, showing how they moved through a hopeful situation as represented by this model. I conclude this chapter with a summary of new learning concerning the relevance of this hope model in the lives of American young adults.

## The Model

### Hope as a Process and an Orientation to Change, Difficulty, and Uncertainty

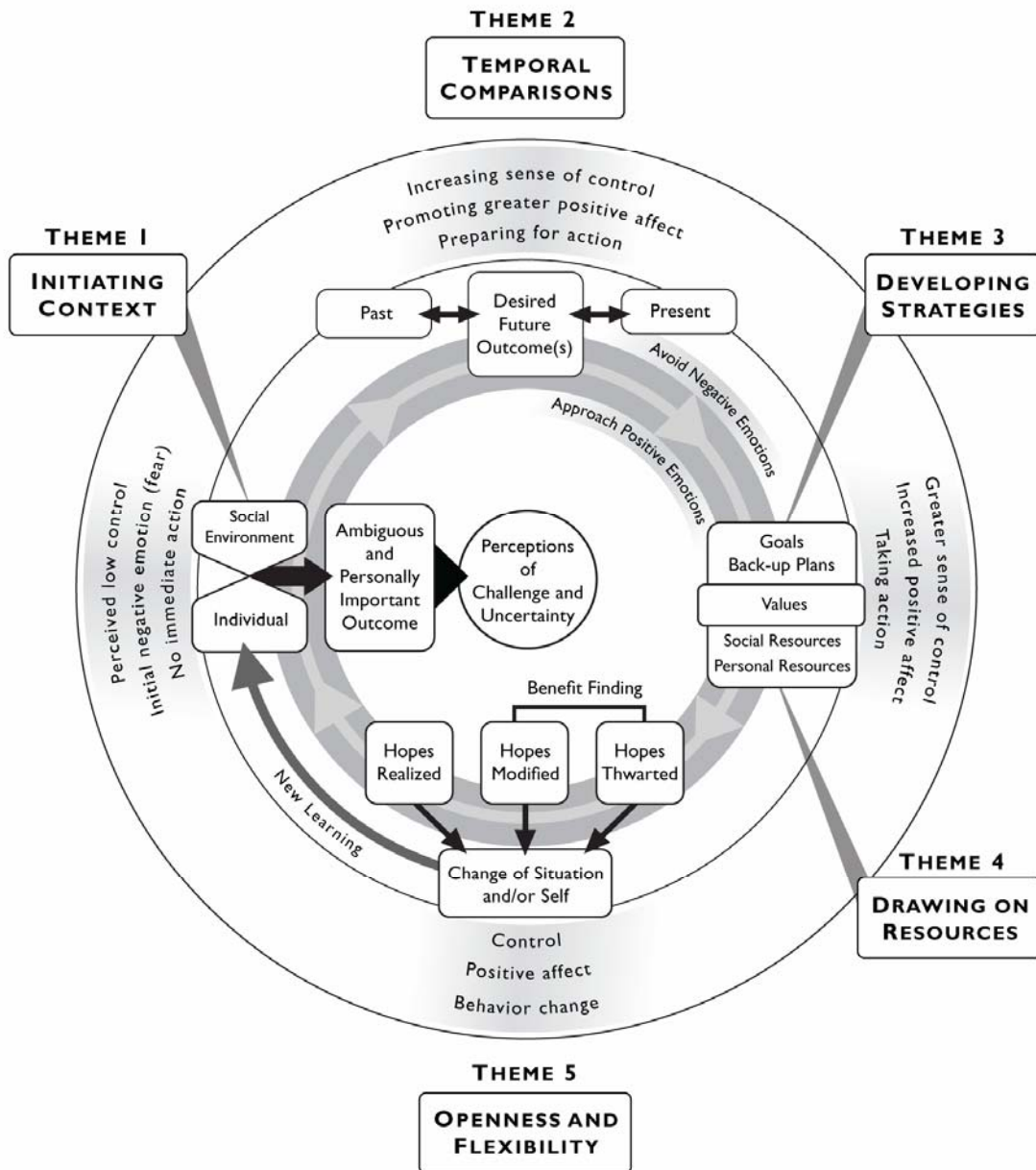
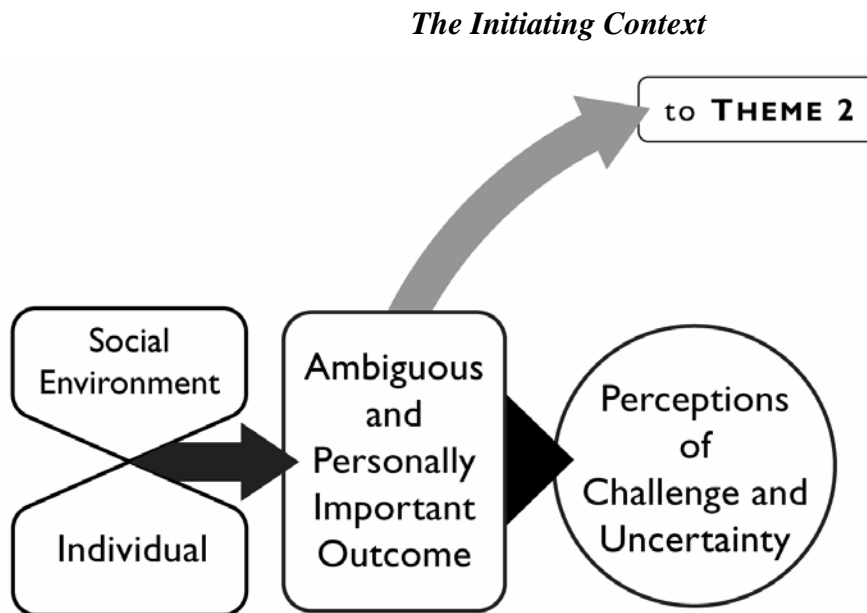


Figure 4. The Complete Model



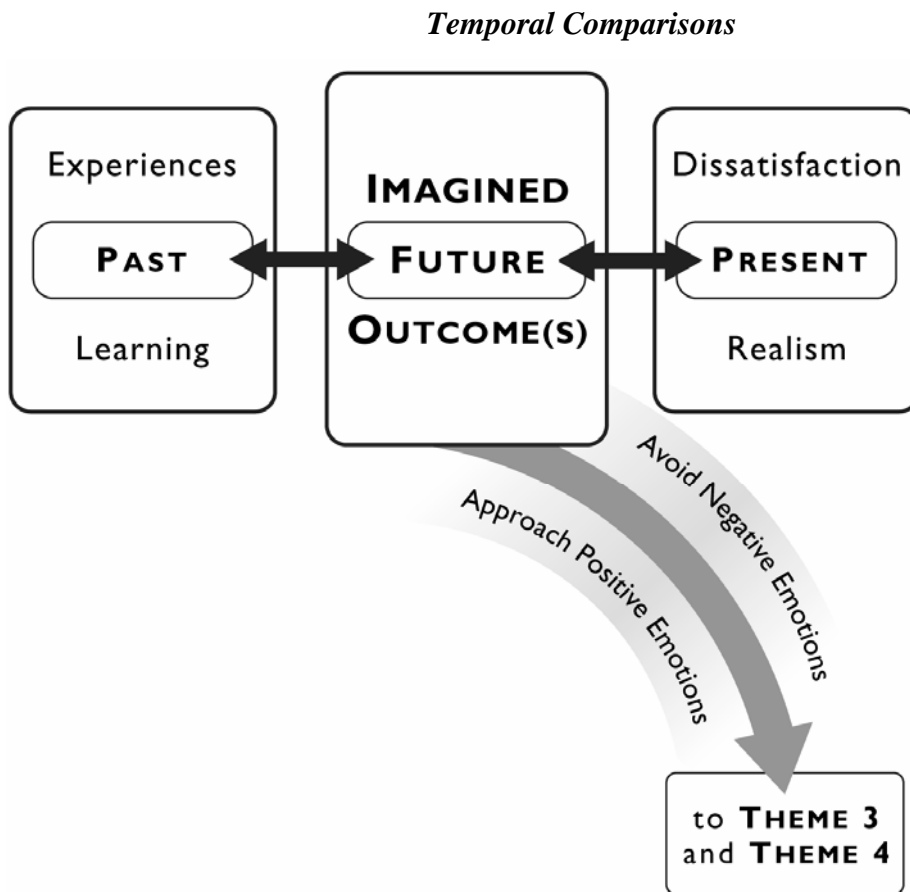


**Figure 5. Theme 1: The Initiating Context**

Hope appears to be salient when individuals [Individual], interacting with their social environments [Social Environment], face challenging situations whose outcomes are both personally important and yet uncertain [Ambiguous and Personally Important Outcome]. This suggests that such situations are appraised by individuals to be outside of their direct control, for which no immediate mitigating action is possible, thereby producing an initial fear response [*see outer circle, Figure 4*]. It is posited that the elicitation of hope is one way of adaptively mitigating such a negative emotional response. As Figure 4 illustrates, an individual’s perceptions of difficulty about an ambiguous situation [Perceptions of Challenge and Uncertainty] remain central to the hope process. Because of the association between hope and realism, hoping individuals are posited to eschew the “absolute confidence” of optimists, thereby never wholly being certain of “a favorable outcome” (Lazarus, 1999, p. 672), implying the existence of some level of fear or doubt.

Nevertheless, even at this preliminary stage in the hope process, hopeful individuals have some degree of confidence in their ability to defy an otherwise inevitable course. This is postulated to be based typically on previous experiences [*the arrow marked New Learning in Figure 4*], as well as a belief that such defiance is

worthwhile. Rather than simply explain this as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), a construct originally posited as situation-specific, or as the generalized outcome expectancies associated with optimism (Scheier & Carver, 1985), I propose that the willingness to engage in the hope process represents an overall positive orientation to life. The following explication thus examines both the process and orientation of hope as illustrated by three test cases.



**Figure 6. Theme 2: Temporal Comparisons**

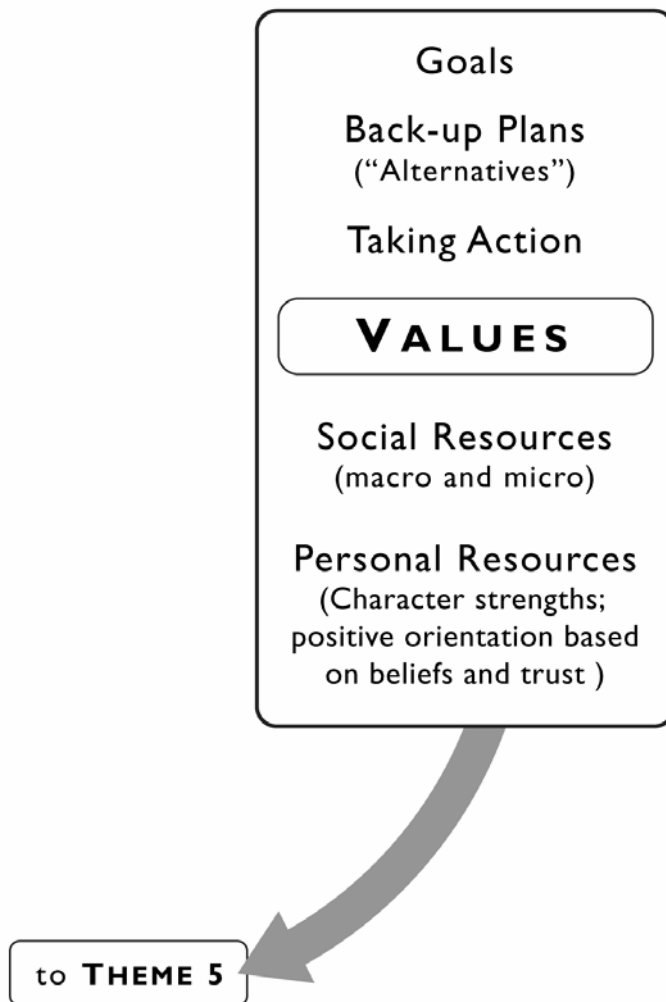
The next stage in the model, illustrated in Figure 6, concerns the three temporal spaces that hopeful individuals are postulated to inhabit. All three are important, although the ability to imagine a desired future outcome [Imagined Future Outcome(s)] is posited to be paramount.

In order to effectively envision a preferred solution to the current challenge, however, individuals must be able to appraise realistically the present situation [Present: realism]. Moreover, they need to experience sufficient dissatisfaction [Present: dissatisfaction] with current circumstances to determine that preparing for action, maintaining some degree of control, and experiencing positive affect [*see outer circle, Figure 4*] are both desirable and necessary. That is, individuals must be motivated toward striving for an imagined future outcome rather than be content to maintain the status quo. The reason why Lorne, introduced in Chapter Four, appeared to have no need for hope was because he expressed little desire for his future to be much different from his present. This is never the case with higher hope individuals whose envisioned future is sufficiently compelling to foster hope and motivate them to take the action that must accompany it, thereby differentiating hope from merely wishing.

It is posited that the hoping process is stalled at this stage if individuals are unable or unwilling to: a) envision a future that is sufficiently compelling and perceived to be possible, and/or b) believe that they have the ability, and the social connections, to potentially bring about the desired change. I propose that being able to do all of these things depends on the individual's connection with the third temporal space, the past. This is optimally drawn upon in order to extract lessons that were either directly experienced by an individual previously [Past: experiences], or that were learned through listening to or observing others [Past: learning].

Principally, however, imagining a future that represents one or more ideal possible outcomes [Imagined Future Outcome(s)] is postulated to produce two types of motivation: the desire to approach positive emotions like happiness and joy and the desire to avoid negative emotions such as fear and anxiety. These motivations not only provide the impetus for the action that the hoping individual decides to take, but they help to shape the strategies that they choose in order to gain a greater sense of control over ambiguous circumstances and increase their experience of positive affect (*see outer circle, Figure 4*).

*Developing Strategies*



**Figure 7. Themes 3 & 4: Developing Strategies & Drawing on Resources**

The top part of the box shown in Figure 7 relates to the various strategies that individuals use in the next stage in the hope process. The first of these involves setting goals [Goals] that may vary in specificity and complexity but are perceived to move individuals incrementally toward their previously-imagined, desired outcome. Given that one can never be totally confident about the future, regardless of the action one takes, the realistic and hopeful individual additionally devises one or more alternative options [Back-up Plans or “Alternatives”] in case the first plan is stalled by insurmountable obstacles or other impediments to success. Having developed these goals and back-up

plans the individual also understands the need for, and is prepared to take action in pursuit of them.

Both the original goal and the back-up plans are believed to be strongly influenced by the individual's "beliefs about desirable ways of behaving or desirable end states" (Feather, 1995, p. 1135), over and above the positive, socially determined valences associated with the goals themselves [Values]. These values are, in turn, influenced by both the individual's personal resources [Personal Resources] and the social environment [Social Resources]. Indeed, these inner and outer resources combine to provide the capital with which individuals take action, thereby taking control of challenging and uncertain circumstances and increasing their experience of positive affect [*see outer circle, Figure 4*].

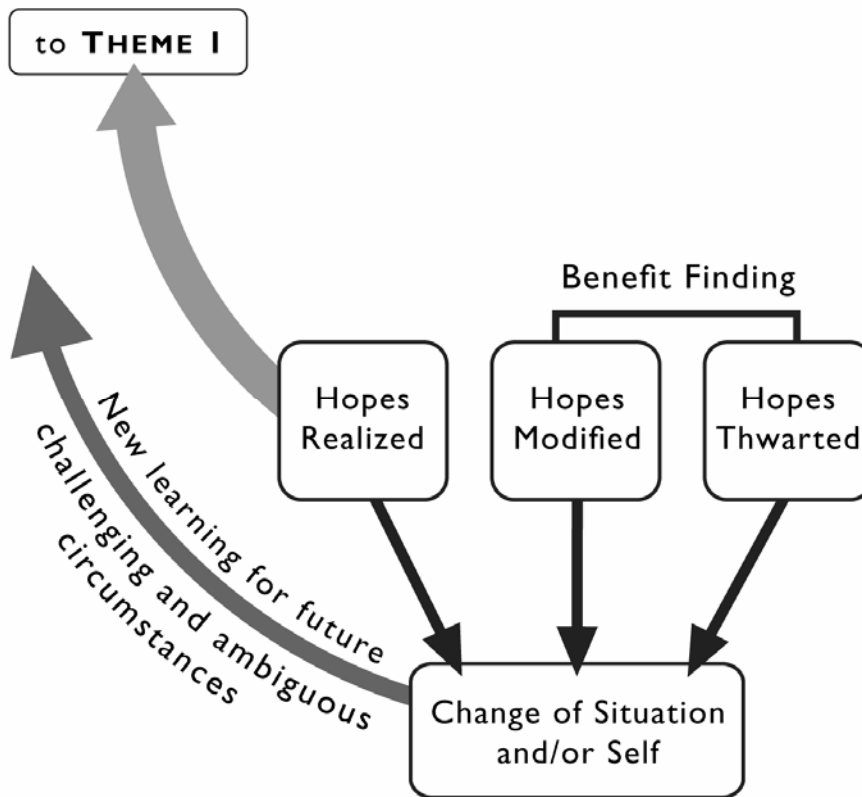
### ***Drawing on Resources***

There are two levels of social resources on which individuals potentially draw, and the influence of each takes various forms. The micro level [Social Resources: micro] represents immediate or extended family members, friends, partners, teachers, and peers. These connections provide a wide array of advocacy and guidance, ranging from direct mentorship on how to manage and overcome challenging situations, to learning through others' lives how positive change might be achieved. The macro level [Social Resources: macro] concerns less personal contacts, such as non-profit organizations, government agencies, and Internet sources, and these are typically experienced as providing information or financial support, as was the case for Hazel once she found that she was pregnant.

As well as being willing and able to leverage these social connections, individuals optimally draw on an array of interpersonal resources or "character strengths" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), that have been developed over time [Personal Resources: character strengths]. Examples of such strengths have been identified by Peterson and Seligman (2004) as representing wisdom and knowledge (e.g., creativity, openness to experience, open-mindedness, and perspective-taking), courage (e.g., perseverance, industriousness, enthusiasm, and energy), humanity (e.g., kindness, compassion, social intelligence, and

emotional intelligence), justice (e.g., social responsibility, and leadership), and temperance (e.g., self-regulation). In addition, hopeful individuals are oriented toward what Peterson and Seligman (2004) have termed the “transcendent” strengths (p. xi) that include faith, purpose, religiousness and spirituality. Inherent in those strengths are the trust and beliefs that help to positively orient hopeful individuals toward finding meaning in challenging and uncertain circumstances [Personal Resources: positive orientation based on beliefs and trust].

*Openness and Flexibility About Outcomes*



**Figure 8. Theme 5: Openness and Flexibility About Outcomes**

As shown in Figure 8, as these strategies and resources produce some form of resolution the individual achieves one of three possible outcomes. The first is that the hope is realized as it was envisioned [Hopes Realized]. The second potential outcome is that one’s hope is modified and does not wholly conform to the original, imagined outcome [Hopes Modified]. The third potential outcome is that the individual’s hope is

not at all successful [Hopes Thwarted]. When faced with the two latter outcomes, hopeful individuals draw on their positive orientation in order to find meaning in their situation [Benefit Finding]. They do this by retroactively changing the original goal to a positive result (e.g., “I’m stronger as a result of this experience”), or by changing their attitude and perspective on the original challenge (e.g., “I did my best”). In finding benefit through the experience rather than the outcome, hopeful individuals are able to demonstrate a greater degree of mastery or control over otherwise negative situations, thereby boosting the positive affect experienced [*see outer circle, Figure 4*]. All three of these outcomes result in change [Change of Situation and/or Self]. This experience is then assimilated in order to help an individual more confidently and competently tackle future challenging and uncertain situations as they inevitably arise [*the arrow marked “new learning”*]. Thus, the process of hope is both enduring and adaptive in its response to new challenging and ambiguous circumstances, not least because of the individual’s orientation toward positive feelings and experiences.

### **Test of the Model Using Three Cases**

Having outlined the model generally, I now review each of the themes and connections in relation to three higher hope participants from a hold-out sample, to whom I had given the names Troy, Tomas, and Tamara. Each of these sections begins with a brief biographical outline of the individual, and then uses parts of their interview data to illustrate one example of the hope model in action.

#### ***Troy***

I first introduced Troy in Chapter Four, when I discussed how Henry’s focus on the present time seemed out of keeping with the greater emphasis on future-time orientation exhibited by other members of the higher hope group. This young man had, at one time, attended a much more prestigious academic institution than the high school from which I had recruited him for this study. It had been his decision to make that switch because of the second school’s “much more friendly” atmosphere. It appeared that the adverse life circumstances that were typically experienced by students at the second

school had facilitated stronger relationships among them. Troy described how many of “those kids probably had something bad happen to them, drug-wise or death, or something like that...it seems to make them more friendly because they can relate to you.”

Personal tragedy was certainly something that Troy shared with many of his peers. Several years earlier Troy’s father had died suddenly, at which time this young man had been called upon to “grow up fast” in order to provide emotional support to his mother, with whom he still lived. This experience appeared to support Troy’s belief that change was not only inevitable but that even enforced change could be “kind of positive.” He told me that having to become “the man of the house” had made him become a stronger and “better” person, although he found it hard to articulate what he meant beyond that.

At the time of our interview, Troy was attending the local community college where he was “getting my basics out of the way,” with the plan to transfer later to the same university that Tamara, another of the test participants, was attending. Troy had indicated on the demographics form that both of his parents had “some college” and said that their discussions with him had meant that he had “always planned to go to college and never had that job-just-out-of-school mindset.” The high value Troy placed on getting a good education was not shared by many of his friends, however, some of whom had dropped out of high school and were now doing low-level jobs. Their fate was not one that Troy wished to emulate, saying: “When I look at some of my friends I don’t want to have to...be stuck in a dead end job...that’s not fulfilling my potential or my goals.” It is against this backdrop of educational and career aspirations that I now offer Troy’s illustration of the hope model in action.

### ***Troy’s Hope Story***

Being in college [Social Environment] was not easy for Troy [Individual]. When I asked him what was the most difficult thing he was facing at the time, he replied, “School...juggling it all.” Troy felt that he had been thrown in at the deep end, where the college professors were “not going to baby you. You’re pretty much on your own, you do



it. It's not high school. It's fast-paced, it's not like holding your hand any more <laughs>.” Although Troy stated many times that getting a college education was important to him, he did not take success in college for granted [Ambiguous and Personally Important Outcome]. Indeed, higher education presented Troy with a context of considerable challenge and uncertainty [Perceptions of Challenge and Uncertainty]. For example, he told me that the stress he was experiencing as a new college student caused him frequently to harbor negative thoughts of failure “when I’m, like, studying and stuff like that...like, I’m not going to pass or something, because I’m so overloaded at times.” In that regard, Troy was not optimistic or wholly confident of acing his classes, even though he was an able student. For example, Troy described himself as “well-rounded” academically, adding that “I pretty much get every subject whether it be not my strong subject or it is...I’m still, like, good at, like, most of them.” Nevertheless, courses such as biology were particularly difficult for him, and Troy had concluded that his future success would be facilitated only by focusing all of his attention on what he had to do in the “now” to maintain his grades and thus succeed at transferring to the university of his choice in due course [Goals].

Troy was typically a future-oriented individual who nevertheless had realistically appraised his circumstances to be so challenging that he needed to be more present-time focused [Present: realism]. While he was in high school Troy “used to focus more” on the future but now he was “more with the present. I still have the future goals but they’re not as...prominent.” He explained that his thinking about the future while he was in high school had been mainly concerned with “what I could expect in college.” Now that he was in college, and that expectation had become a somewhat harsh reality, Troy found it more salient to “deal with stuff that is going on right then and there.”

The past also played an important role in Troy’s thinking, however. Previous experience in school had taught him that if he expended effort then this resulted in academic success. For those subjects like biology that Troy found most challenging, his strategy included putting “time and effort into it,” and persevering to the extent that he would work “long hours in the night.” By doing that, Troy he had found that his hard

work “pays off” [Past: experiences and learning]. Additionally, this realization that effort equaled success helped to support Troy’s orientation toward viewing life “like, the glass is half full...not half empty.” Ironically, the experience of losing his father at a young age [Past: experience] had also shaped Troy’s trust that life would present him with future benefits, even if he was experiencing adversity at the present time [Past: learning]. I shall return to this topic shortly.

In the meantime, however, there was considerable evidence from speaking with this young man that, in keeping with his higher hope peers, Troy was able to adapt quickly to new circumstances. With respect to college, he told me that “Since this is my first semester I did not really have good study habits because I did not really know what to do, but now I know what to do.” Troy had accomplished those study skills by paying attention to, and acting on what his teachers told him about what he would need to succeed in that environment [*greater sense of control, taking action, contributing to positive affect*].

Academic success was important to Troy [Values]. Not only did he want to get “the best education,” but he was determined “to get the job I want and not be unhappy with a job four years from now” [Goals], articulating a combination of approach and avoidance goals. While he did not directly express any dissatisfaction with his performance in college, it was clear that Troy desired to increase his sense of control over his current challenging circumstances by taking the action necessary to effect positive change. For example, he made sure to set aside sufficient time through the week to attend to his school work, adding that “If I have something to do, like a paper to write, I usually like to get it done so I don’t have to worry about it.”

The “so I don’t have to worry about it” portion of that last sentence intrigued me, since it suggested, in keeping with the impression I had been given by other higher hope participants, that Troy took action in order to avoid or at least minimize negative affect [Avoid Negative Emotions]. As such, Troy’s ability not just to look into the future but to anticipate the feelings associated with potential future outcomes [Approach Positive Emotions] seemed to be a useful strategy for him. As he told me:

I tend to try to look at I'll succeed. I may be stressed now, but something else will happen that will put me better. Like a good grade will make me feel good. So, like my biology for example. I did not think I was going to pass but I passed. And when the teacher gave us the test I knew everything and it made me think, wow, I think I passed it...I'll feel good after.

Among the three test participants, Troy arguably had the least focused or well articulated idea of what he might do as a future career [Goals]. Photography had interested him since high school and he expressed a desire to “kind of want to travel and take pictures,” but he also believed he might go into “business management or something like that.” He was unable to specify what kind of business that might be, or what precisely he might do in such a position, however. This lack of specificity regarding his future career was of no concern to Troy. On the contrary, he appeared to be confident that he would find what he was meant to do at some appropriate later time. In the meantime, however, since he did not know whether “photography is going to work out...I'm always looking for something else that I would like to do.” Indeed, he told me that “I tend to have a lot of goals in case of something not working out, then I can always turn to something else” [Back-up Plans]. Troy took the same approach when he applied for jobs so that if “some don't work out I still have that other one to go to that I still like.” Having multiple options to pursue therefore made life “positive and not negative” for Troy, not least by increasing his experience of positive affect because “you're going to succeed at something. You can fail, but it's less likely that you're going to fail.”

It was in the areas of Themes Three [Developing Strategies], Four [Drawing on Resources], and Five [Openness and Flexibility] in relation to Troy's educational and career goals and aspirations that I became aware of the considerable intertwining of all of the factors under discussion, namely: goals, back-up plans, values, social resources, personal resources, attitude toward change, and benefit finding. While the illustration of the model (see Figure 4) may give the impression that all of these facets of hope are neatly contained and can be articulated logically as incremental steps or stages, the reality of Troy's life was much more complex, indeed “messier.” The following exchange concerning Troy's attitude toward change and the discussion of his career plans, provided

an example of how a model such as this is merely an idealized representation of a complex process that varies considerably across persons.

As mentioned previously, Troy realistically accepted that change was inevitable. His attitude was that “change isn’t bad at all,” and that “you are going to change regardless of whether you like it or not, and most of the time for me it’s changing for the better.” This overall positive orientation to life appeared to help him to feel more comfortable with not knowing precisely what he might do after graduating college. In Troy’s case, it appeared less important for him to have goals and back-up plans as to have the foundation of values, character strengths, trust and belief, plus the social resources that would enable him to move confidently into the future.

For example, Troy had learned to place a high priority on education [Values] from his family [Social Resources: micro], to the extent that he knew “I’ve always wanted to succeed.” He exhibited a keen interest in lots of different things, a quality shared by the higher hope cohort I interviewed. Troy thus did not feel the need to spend much time focusing on the specifics of his future, having experienced times when “I’ll be studying and I’ll come across something that interests me and I’ll find myself thinking about if its something I could do.” He confidently expected that one of these opportunities would “kind of work its way to meet me, I guess <laughs>,” adding: “I’ll probably just come across it (a future career). And I’ll pretty much know. Like, yeah, that’s what I’m going to work toward.” Troy described this as discovering “something that will kind of define me. I figure something’s going to happen.” This trust that a future opportunity would become apparent to him [Personal Resources: positive orientation based on beliefs and trust], thus allowed Troy to focus more on what he needed to do at school in order to prepare himself to take advantage of some future interest and opportunity, rather than on the distal career goal itself.

This overall trust and belief in a positive future was aligned with Troy’s attitude toward failure at school. Again, he was realistic enough to accept that “either I’m going to pass or fail” his courses, but said that “I’m not worried about failing because I know I’m not...pretty much I know I’m not.” This confidence in his ability to succeed

academically was not solely due to the association Troy had made between expending effort at school and getting good grades. His attitude toward not being successful was that “it’s not going to put me down,” because “I would still know that at least I tried for it.” As such, Troy demonstrated the higher hope strategy of changing the original goal in order to claim some other form of success [Benefit Finding].

I mean, if it doesn’t work out like that it’s still not a bad thing. It’s kind of, like, everything happens for a reason almost. Maybe you failed because, I mean...it would make you stronger as a person or something...you have to be down...you have to get back up when you’re down...to get to the next step I guess.

The ability to “get back up when you’re down” appeared to be a combination of courage, determination and perseverance [Personal Resources: character strengths] as well as tapping into those influential relationships where he would receive guidance and advice [Social Resources: micro]. Troy told me, for example, that:

When I get stressed out or something about school or something like that, my mom will talk to me or whatever and guide me through it. Or my cousin who goes to <names top-tier university>, he’s a junior, he would just tell me, “Yeah, it gets hard but you just gotta work your way through it.”

This intricate combination of process [taking action] and positive orientation [beliefs and trust] was consistent with Troy’s definition of hope and the example he offered when I asked him to tell me about a time he felt hopeful. To Troy, hope was “showing you that you have a chance to get something you want.” Whereas with biology “there seems to be no hope in passing but then, like, I get a test back and I did good on it and it just seems like it opened up a new door almost.”

With respect to his positive orientation to life and how this facilitated the hope process, Troy also articulated how he dealt with hopes that were either different to what he had originally envisioned [Hopes Modified], or were not successful [Hopes Thwarted]. When faced with either he said: “I just kind of let it go.” For example, Troy was an excellent lacrosse player who nevertheless failed to be selected for the Varsity team at the first high school he attended. Instead of thinking that he had failed the goal of

being on the team, Troy focused instead on “having fun.” As he explained: “I’d rather have fun whether it was a disadvantage (failing to be selected for the team) or not. It was still fun playing...as long as I got to play it was alright with me. I just looked at it differently, I guess” [Benefit Finding]. This is an example of how, by remaining open and flexible about their goals, higher hope individuals are able to experience greater control in their lives, boost their positive affect, and more successfully adapt to changing circumstances (*see outer circle, Figure 4*). In Troy’s case, this “New Learning” [*see arrow leading back to Theme One in Figure 8*] appeared to pre-dispose this young man to better adapt to future challenging and ambiguous circumstances.

### ***Tomas***

In contrast to Troy, Tomas was a first-generation college student whose parents had not attended school beyond 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Of the three test cases, Tomas was the only member to come from a low socio-economic status family. He described his parents’ lives as “everything’s, like, again, doing the same thing, work, come home, talk to us, and then go back to work.” In being accepted to a top-tier university where he was majoring in biology, Tomas reported how he had given his parents “renewed hope” that one of their family would “make it in life.” Tomas had one older brother who had attended the local community college for half a semester before dropping out, a younger brother whom Tomas described as liking “the street life,” and a nine-year old sister who suffered serious asthma attacks. Within his immediate social environment, therefore, Tomas had no role models to prepare him for, or help him to adjust to, college life.

Whereas Troy still lived at home and in the city where most of his friends lived, at the time of our interview Tomas was living many miles away from his family and the only girl about whom he had ever felt serious. Like Troy, Tomas also recognized that he had been ill-prepared educationally with respect to acquiring the study habits he needed to succeed in college, but he had the additional challenge of negotiating this “brand new experience” of higher education alongside “paying my own way” by working 19 hours a week on campus. The following example shared by Tomas demonstrated how he moved

through the hope model in order to alleviate the social isolation that he faced when first arriving at college.

### ***Tomas' Hope Story***

Because no one in his family had previously encountered going to college, and he had no high school or family friends there, this situation [Social Environment] presented Tomas [Individual], who expressed strong family values and the desire to be sociable, with a great deal of mixed emotions. He described how he enjoyed the freedom of college and was willing to accept his new-found responsibilities, but felt anxiety that everyone in his family was “looking at me to set the bar, the standard I guess, among my brothers and sister.” As such, Tomas felt he had “better not mess up” because “I’m supposed to be the perfect child now,” a role that presented him with considerable challenge and uncertainty [Perceptions of Challenge and Uncertainty]. Having “zero friends” on campus, a condition over which he originally had low control, given that he could not conjure up friends on a whim, had not helped Tomas’ feelings of isolation and loneliness in the early part of his first semester. How Tomas went about changing that particular social situation [Ambiguous and Personally Important Outcome] demonstrated the way in which he navigated the hope model.

One piece of self-knowledge that Tomas had acquired over time was that he adapted quickly to new situations and that he was “pretty good with people” [Past: experiences & learning]. In middle school, for example, Tomas had been “a really shy person” and it had taken him until high school before he opened up and started making friends. Unhappy with feeling so lonely while being away from friends and family [Present: dissatisfaction], Tomas realized that if he was going to meet new people in college he had to make the effort. For example, he described how “no one’s stuck in a classroom forced to see the same people every day. In college, everyone’s just walking around so you’re forced to make friends, you know. Because if you don’t want to be lonely you’ve got to put yourself out there” [Present: realism]. Tomas considered that having no friends other than his three college roommates was “just temporary,” however.

Given that this new environment was requiring Tomas to find potential new friends [Imagined Future Outcome] he began taking strategic action.

The problem with fixating solely on important goals without addressing the emotions that inevitably accompany them is that it assumes goal-related strategies exist in a vacuum. As most of us will have experienced, the energy required for goal pursuit can be seriously depleted when one is “really sad or depressed,” as Tomas found himself to be during those early weeks in college. In order to mitigate those negative emotions [Avoid Negative Emotions] and replace them with positive ones [Approach Positive Emotions], Tomas would “call my parents or my friends,” not necessarily to ask them for help or advice but just to engage in “everyday conversations.” As Tomas explained “just hearing their voices again gives me more energy and revitalizes me...talking with them brings my spirits up” [Social Resources: micro].

Tomas navigated a variety of options to help him meet his social goals [Goals] and he engaged in positive self-talk in order to remind himself that there were “other people out there who are just like me, that are just very busy and don’t have the time to make new friends,” thereby helping to regulate otherwise negative emotions [Personal Resources: character strengths]. For example, Tomas met people at the gym where he liked to work out to keep his body in shape. He joined some sports clubs, more for the social scene than the exercise. Tomas also volunteered with various campus organizations, enabling him both to “network, make new friends, but it also looks good on your résumé for when you graduate, to show you weren’t just at college but you volunteered in different things.” As another way of finding people to befriend, Tomas visited places that other students frequented, such as food courts and cafés [Back-up Plans]. As I had found with other higher hope participants, taking action appeared to be a strategy by which Tomas was able to control negative affect, as in: “There is no point in being sad and, you know, sitting in your room. The way I see it, if you don’t do something then nothing’s going to happen” (*see outer circle, Figure 4*).

Although there was no direct conversation between us concerning the specific values underpinning Tomas’ goal of increasing his social circle, I could infer this from



other parts of our conversation. This young man came from a very close-knit family where expressions of love, appreciation and respect were commonplace both within that unit as well as being extended to others [Values]. Tomas told me, for example, how when his friend's father died, everyone had rallied around to support that family "and we saw that that made them happy again, and that made me happy that they were happy again." Being happy and feeling good about his life were highly important to Tomas. Nevertheless, the negative experiences he had faced thus far had enabled Tomas to understand how, over time even the most tragic of situations could change for the better, thus contributing to a trust in life [Personal Resources: Positive orientation based on beliefs and trust].

With respect to Tomas' social situation in college, he was indeed successful at making new friends thanks to the various efforts he had made to socialize [Hopes Realized]. He gave an indication of his attitude toward failure, however, when he said, "If you fail in one person you just go out and meet new people to see if you can make a new friend" [Personal Resources: character strengths of persistence and courage]. Underscoring what I have written earlier, with regard to how perceptions of challenge and uncertainty are maintained throughout the hope process, Tomas described his situation in college as "sink or swim," both acknowledging the fear inherent in uncertain situations but having the motivation to take action anyway.

I guess it's like jumping over a cliff...you gotta make the jump or hope that someone catches you or, you know, be afraid and never know what it feels like to jump over...like, just talking and meeting new people has helped me develop more as a human I guess. Like an adult.

This implied to me that even when goals are successful, that their propensity for openness and flexibility enabled higher hope individuals to find multiple benefits from outcomes [Benefit Finding].

Finally with respect to Tomas, this young man's positive orientation to life appeared to be strongly supported by his religious beliefs. As a Catholic, Tomas believed that God "won't send me anything that I can't overcome...this is happening for me

because I'll be able to overcome it and it will make me stronger" [Change of Situation and/or Self]. The "new learning" that Tomas thus elicited from challenging circumstances were imbued with a sense of meaning and purpose that provided this young man with a strong foundation for negotiating future difficult and uncertain circumstances (*see arrow in Figure 4*). When I asked him to define hope, Tomas described it as "positive change," and "a reason to keep doing what you're doing." As far as his parents were concerned, Tomas told me that his college education represented the potential for "something new," and a life for at least one of their children that was more fulfilling than they had experienced themselves. In keeping with the social nature of hope acknowledged among nurse-researchers (e.g., Dufault & Martocchio, 1985) and philosophers (e.g., Godfrey, 1987), Tomas seemed to be his family's current best hope for the future.

### *Tamara*

Unlike Tomas, Tamara did have role models who had previously demonstrated to her the value of a college education. Her mother had originally dropped out of college after marrying Tamara's father and having two of their subsequent three children. She then decided to go back to complete her degree, in part because "she wanted our lives to be better and if she got a college education she figured it would be better for us." Tamara's mother worked as an accountant and "every year she'll go up another level with more money and she's just really happy." Tamara's father, who had also dropped out of college after getting married, now owned a successful furniture business and although a college education was not necessary now, he had expressed regret at failing to get his bachelor's degree.

A small, slim young woman, Tamara had nevertheless accrued considerable success as a wrestler, earning fifth place in a State championship while in high school. She described wrestling as "being my whole life," and continued to play a role in coaching others. Also hugely important to Tamara was her relationship with Miguel, whom she had been dating for a year and described as the man she intended to marry. This strong determination appeared to be causing concern within Tamara's family, possibly based on the fear of history repeating itself. For example, a cousin had predicted

that Tamara would end up dropping out of college because of the time she was spending with Miguel. Additionally, Tamara's mother, a devout Catholic, was unhappy that her daughter would consider marrying someone outside of that faith. Such judgments from members of her family had resulted in this young woman categorizing herself, along with her favorite gay cousin, to be "the outsiders of the family."

Tamara cried when she told me how her father had for years regularly beaten herself, her mother, and younger brother, only sparing the younger sister from his angry outbursts. This history of physical abuse was pivotal, nevertheless, to Tamara's positive belief in a better future. In keeping with the ability of higher hope individuals to derive benefit from even the most negative of situations, Tamara articulated how "in a way" she had her father to thank "for everything that he's done. If I wasn't beaten, then what would I have done? Would I still be this way? Would I be sad, would I be a slightly lower level of happy, or what?"

It is Tamara's positive orientation to life, together with the process she used to navigate the challenges associated with joining her college sorority that is illustrated next.

### ***Tamara's Hope Story***

As with the other two cases Tamara [Individual] had found herself challenged in a variety of ways by being in college [Social Environment]. Like Tomas, she was unhappy "being away from the people that matter," and had the same issues as both Tomas and Troy with respect to her school work [Ambiguous and Personally Important Outcome]. Nevertheless college, from which Tamara intended to graduate with a Master's degree in social work in five years [Goal], was everything that she had imagined it to be, describing it as "my fantasy world of college" come true [Imagined Future Outcome].

One of these future fantasies had been for Tamara to join a sorority [Goal]. She told me how interested she had been to research the process and discover how different sororities went about selecting new "sisters." What Tamara did not like about some of them was how they "would go out drinking and partying with their letters," in her view "disrespecting their letters." Tamara decided to pursue the "classy sorority" [Values]

instead, using a number of goal- and action-oriented strategies that she considered necessary to achieve that goal.

At the time that they were getting ready to pledge, one of the other girls in Tamara's group "had her attitude all the time," and was causing the rest of them to receive "violations" and "fines" that seriously jeopardized their likelihood of "crossing." This situation presented Tamara with an obstacle to a personally important goal that introduced a degree of ambiguity concerning the outcome [Perceptions of Challenge and Uncertainty]. Demonstrating the realism inherent in hope, Tamara recognized that "you can't change someone...you can show them the path but that doesn't mean they're going to walk it" [Present: realism]. Nevertheless, Tamara was unhappy that the bad behavior of one group member might ruin her chances of joining the sorority [Present: dissatisfaction]. The rest of the group began to isolate themselves from the offender but, as Tamara said "we always had to remember that she was still there. We can't just leave her, so we had to deal with that." One way Tamara did that was to draw on her self-knowledge about being "used to succeeding if I see a goal. No matter how long it takes...if I see a goal and I know I can get it then I will" [Past: experiences and learning].

At this stage in her story it was hard to separate out Themes Two (Temporal Comparisons), Three (Developing Strategies) and Four (Drawing on Resources). In keeping with the mixed emotional quality of hope, Tamara "kept having little flashes and daydreams," in which her future self was told that she was not going to be allowed into the sorority. In order to counter the negative emotions resulting from such a disappointment [Avoid Negative Emotions], Tamara engaged in positive self-talk [Approach Positive Emotions].

So I, like, I kinda would pep myself up. "You can do this, just do what you can to make them see you can do this, and you can succeed and you will be an important role in their sorority" and that they need me. I would tell myself "You're a leader, you can do this."

The reason why Tamara faced up to the potential failure to achieve her goal was "in order to prepare myself, just in case." It appeared that when the probability of

attaining a personally important outcome was perceived to be low “I can be ready for it. I can be: “Okay, I did not get that. So let’s move on to the next step.” The ability to adapt to negative situations was facilitated by having alternative modes of action [Back-up Plans], as well as drawing support from her friends and family [Social Resources: micro]. Despite her stated confidence in her ability to succeed, Tamara nevertheless suffered self-doubt, at which time she would “have conversations with people” including her mother, Miguel, and her best friend whom she described as “always there. It’s like you don’t have to call, they’re already there.”

Tamara’s description of “always having a back-up plan just in case something doesn’t happen,” illustrated the paradox articulated by Lazarus (2000) who described hope as “fearing the worst but yearning for better and believing a favorable outcome is possible” (p. 219). Having a back-up plan or alternative options to pursue enabled Tamara to feel more in control of ambiguous situations, particularly those in which she considered herself to have a low chance of success. Nevertheless, “I try not to think about failing because as our wrestling coach tells us, if you look down that’s where you’re falling.” Taking that approach as a maxim for her life, Tamara would engage in positive self-talk [Personal Resources: character strengths] founded on her trust and belief in her ability to succeed [Personal Resources: positive orientation based on beliefs and trust], that in turn was based on three things: “resources,” “support,” and “knowledge” [Personal and Social Resources]. When asked to articulate how she was different to those who gave up whenever they were faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles, Tamara pointed to having a positive orientation to life, adding “I work for it, I have the ambition. Whereas they are just sitting there thinking, “Oh, I guess I won’t get it.” But no, you can. You just got to push for it.”

With respect to the desired outcome, Tamara and her group were successful in being invited to join the sorority, and this young woman went on to have considerable success through holding leadership positions and doing volunteer work within it [Hopes Realized]. Tamara had already formulated how she would have benefited had she failed, however, [Hopes Thwarted] when she told me that she would have simply pledged the

following semester when “I’ll be ready. I’ll already have the knowledge and I can just push harder...do everything ten times better.” This would have represented the “new learning” (*see arrow in Figure 8*) that would have informed that future action.

To summarize Tamara’s view, change was “always for the best” because “everything happens for a reason” [Benefit Finding]. Her personal definition of hope was that it involved imagining “the best outcome,” being motivated to take action and to “strive for that,” and constantly talking to herself in ways that maintained her positive view, even for those things “you know you can’t control.”

### *Summary of the Three Test Cases*

Having spent a considerable number of pages already explicating this model I conclude this chapter by drawing brief attention to four meta-issues concerning how the hope process is navigated in real life. These especially concern the complexity of hope and importance of viewing this model flexibly.

- 1) While “values” often had to be inferred from other parts of these data, rather than being explicitly stated, they played an important role that has hitherto been overlooked by psychological theories on hope. As I have stated earlier, higher hope goals cannot be separated from the values that support them. According to Locke (2005), values hierarchies are personally unique, thus representing “the key to individual differences in human motivation: (p. 301). I believe this to be particularly true of hope. Thus, there will always be considerable variations in the degree to which individuals exemplify each of the components within the model. For example, Troy exhibited greater emphasis on a present-time orientation compared with the more future-oriented Tomas and Tamara. As a further illustration, although macro social resources such as the use of the Internet and information produced by government and other agencies were not relevant in these test case examples, they did appear pertinent to the main sample and therefore have been shown to be salient in some circumstances but not others.

I would propose that such individual differences help to explain why hope does not conform to universal rules of human behavior, and has no instantly recognizable, associated facial expressions. Given those challenges, I trust that the proposed model and the data that supported it will help to facilitate recognition of higher or lower hope in individuals, as well as those specific areas in which a lower hope individual might need most help and guidance.

- 2) Even though all five of the main themes in this model have to be experienced for hope to be *hope* and not some other closely-related construct such as optimism, goal orientation, or wishing, it became obvious to me that the order in which the various components played out are not as neatly sequenced or contained within boxes as the Figure 4 illustration on page 186 implies. For example, this was true with respect to the issue of “benefit-finding” (Theme Five) that appeared in some cases to pre-empt “developing strategies” (Theme Three) and “drawing on resources” (Theme Four). I do not feel that this in any way negates the model’s value. On the contrary, it would have been too neat and hence inauthentic in relation to the complexity of everyday life, to have produced a sequenced hope model that never varied from individual to individual.
- 3) Although I have emphasized that this is a process model of hope, it is clear that the orientation piece is pivotal to understanding how and why individuals move through this process. Thus, it is important to view hope not just in terms of goal pursuit but as an individual’s relationship to change, including the belief that change is invariably “good,” and that it is possible to derive benefit from even the most dire circumstances, including losing a parent (Troy) or being physically abused (Tamara).
- 4) Finally, these test cases demonstrated that having higher levels of hope is developmentally important. For example, contrast the following comment from Tamara who was prepared to readily embrace the changes that she would

be facing in the coming years, with Lyle and Lacey's implied fear about their ability to successfully negotiate the "world outside:"

I know the things that I'm ready for, like marriage, graduating, having kids, getting a job, possibly moving...I'm just anticipating the moment. I'm excited, I can't wait...but I know that college is going to be a lot harder so it's like, wow, I'd better do it now and get used to everything, write my papers on time, not procrastinate, that kind of stuff, and just be prepared for what's to come.

In the next chapter, I further discuss some of these issues, together with the limitations of this study, the implications for future theory and research, and some implications for practice.



## CHAPTER SIX

### DISCUSSION

As I was writing this final chapter of my dissertation, the selection of Democratic and Republican nominees who would enter the race for 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States was nearing its close. It occurred to me how often the word *hope* was used in political contexts in preference to *optimism*, *faith*, or even *expectation*, illustrating a specific relationship between *hope* and *change*. For example, in a speech he gave to the Democratic National Convention in 2004, Senator Barack Obama author of *The Audacity of Hope* (2007), identified many of the key themes that had emerged from my study, not least of which were embracing change, transcending difficulty, and constantly believing in a better future.

Do we participate in a politics of cynicism or a politics of hope? John Kerry calls on us to hope. John Edwards calls on us to hope. I'm not talking about blind optimism here -- the almost willful ignorance that thinks unemployment will go away if we just don't talk about it, or the health care crisis will solve itself if we just ignore it. No, I'm talking about something more substantial. It's the hope of slaves sitting around a fire singing freedom songs; the hope of immigrants setting out for distant shores; the hope of a young naval lieutenant bravely patrolling the Mekong Delta; the hope of a mill worker's son who dares to defy the odds; the hope of a skinny kid with a funny name who believes that America has a place for him, too. The audacity of hope! (Retrieved from <http://www.librarian.net/dnc/speeches/obama.txt> on February 10th, 2008).

Similarly, Republican Congressman Dr. Ron Paul used the word *hope* in his campaign, through his motto *Hope For America* (<http://www.ronpaul2008.com/>).

From *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (The Principle of Hope, 1986), written by German Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch (1885-1977), to *A Testament of Hope: The essential writings and speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (1990); from the children's storybook about the life of renowned Mexican-American civil rights activist entitled, *Harvesting Hope: The story of Cesar Chavez* (2003), to Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving the Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2004), all of these authors have

associated hope with a belief that the future can be different from the past; that things can change even if we cannot predict when or how that change will take place, or even know precisely what form that change might take. The suggestion within these books that there needs to be a sense of openness and flexibility when attempting to deal with the vicissitudes of life, also reflects one of the main themes that emerged from these data.

My intention with the above introduction was to establish, through examples of how the term *hope* has been used in a variety of political contexts, that the current conceptualization of hope concerning an individual's relationship with change, difficulty, and uncertainty does indeed conform to folk models. The next section of this chapter builds on that foundation by illustrating what my research has contributed to our understanding of hope as both a process and an orientation. I review my findings in relation to the research questions articulated in Chapter One, as well as responding to a query posed by Peterson and Seligman (2004) who asked what benefits there might be from having higher levels of hope beyond the absence of fear, despair, and negative thinking. I then follow that section with a critical evaluation of the way in which I designed and ran this study, outlining some of its limitations. This leads into the third section in which I discuss the theoretical implications of my model, focusing on two main themes, namely 1) the importance of engaging in qualitative or at least mixed methods approaches when studying highly complex, multi-dimensional constructs such as hope, and 2) the extent to which hope is connected to, and can help better explicate a number of important, well-validated psychological theories.

The penultimate section in this chapter discusses the practical implications of this hope model. My final comments include an outline of the contribution this model makes, over and above those reviewed in Chapter Two, and I conclude with a call to other psychologists, particularly those involved in the "positive psychology" movement, to re-examine and change the way we typically research constructs as universally experienced and "vital" to our well-being as hope.

Overall, I propose that my research has resulted in a new hope model that conceptualizes hope as both a process and an orientation, one whose five themes help to

explain how American young adults control the changes occurring in their lives, and transcend difficult and uncertain life circumstances.

### **Hope as a Process and an Orientation**

Despite the implication that hope is an outcome, derived from the common practice of using self-report instruments to measure it, my findings have revealed hope to be both a process and an orientation. As such, these data suggest a journey, during which the process of hoping represents the way in which travelers move from point A to point B, with hope as an orientation representing the beliefs or perspectives that they carry with them. Specifically, these beliefs or perspectives allow for a more positive interpretation of the challenges and obstacles that the hopeful person faces in life. In that regard, the hoping process represents hope as a state that, as we have discovered, is most commonly elicited in contexts where a personally important outcome or goal is perceived to be difficult and hence uncertainly achieved. Hope as an orientation on the other hand is suggestive of trait hope, including the propensity to believe that the future will always be better than the past or present. Within my model both state and trait hope are therefore represented and considered essential.

I now review each of these facets of hope in turn, and then conclude this section by reviewing these findings in relation to the research questions that propelled my inquiry.

#### ***Hope as a Process***

The process of hoping is, as the model represented by Figures 4 to 8 in Chapter Five illustrates, a means by which an individual maintains some degree of control over difficult circumstances and ambiguous outcomes that are personally important. This process includes imagining one or more preferred outcomes, articulating and pursuing goals that would potentially lead to the most preferred of those outcomes, and planning alternative courses of action in advance in case a specific approach proves untenable. One of the ways that my model of hope represents more than the goal-directing thinking

espoused by Snyder and his colleagues (1991), concerns the role that social relationships play.

As I articulated in Chapter One, I was interested in better understanding the relationship between levels of hope and social connectedness. In particular, I wanted to examine how that association might manifest itself in terms of the number and nature of relationships that individuals with different levels of hope had with their parents, caregivers, friends and significant others. It was clear from the large positive correlation ( $r = .67$ ) between the hope and social connectedness scores, as well as patterns within the qualitative data, that there was a strong prediction between higher levels of hope and higher levels of social connectedness. I did not investigate in depth the number of family members or friends that the higher hope participants had in comparison to their lower hope counterparts, but it became clear during these interviews that there were three key differences between these groups.

The first of these differences was that the members of the higher hope cohort articulated a stronger sense of trust in other people, typically their mothers, close family members, and friends. The second difference was that the higher hope participants knew where to get help, and the third was that they were willing to ask for it. For example, contrast Lyle's recollection of his mother letting him down "again," his perception that he was largely alone in life, and his reluctance to ask for anyone's help, with Hector's close relationship with his mother whom he described as "there for me," and the mutual assistance they expected from and gave to each other.

I propose that hope's relationship with social forces can best be understood through hope's strong association with trust, a construct that has been variously defined by psychologists. According to Rotter (1966, cited in Frost, Stimpson, & Maughan, 1978), trust is "an expectancy held by an individual or a group that the word or promise of another individual or group can be relied upon" (p. 103). McCullough and van Oyen Witvliet (2005), on the other hand, likened trust to forgiveness, while Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995), writing about trust in organizational settings, articulated it in terms of the ability to be vulnerable with another human being. My preference is for Rotter's

(1966) explication because his definition is more closely aligned with the basic trust articulated in Erikson's (1963) psychosocial theory of development.

In terms of a theoretical link between hope and trust, Erikson (1963) postulated that hope developed in early childhood experiences through the infant's recognition that the social world is largely predictable or reliable. As far as I am aware, this postulation has never been empirically tested. A correlational study conducted by Frost et al. (1978) did, however, shed light on the relationship between trust and social resources and, thus, indirectly contributed a possible reason for how hope might be socially constituted.

These researchers articulated "three component conditions that contribute to the existence of trust" (Frost et al., 1978, p. 104), that are strongly suggestive of what my data have shown to be salient to hope. First, like the hope in my model, trust was found to be contextual in that it involved "an ambiguous situation which may lead to a positive or negative personal outcome" (Frost et al., 1978, p. 104). Second, the "trusting individual" recognized the need for help in effecting the desired outcome and sought that help from another individual. Third, they chose to place their confidence in someone who was "highly influential," had an "internal locus of control," and had no "need to control others" (Frost et al., 1978, p. 108).

These descriptors seemed to fit better the individuals to whom the higher hope individuals turned to for help, rather than those who were relied upon by the lower hope participants. For example, Hazel described to me the subtle but effective ways in which her maternal grandmother had helped her stop taking drugs, avoid a second pregnancy, and learn how to conduct herself. This suggested to me someone who was "highly influential," relied on her own sense of values and priorities, and wanted to guide her granddaughter without necessarily controlling her. Loretta's description, on the other hand, of a father who frequently denigrated her, telling her that she was never going to amount to anything or be anyone of consequence, is strongly suggestive of a controlling individual who perhaps relied on external forces to guide his own life and hence used a similar approach with his daughter.

To summarize this portion, therefore, I would suggest that the process of hope relies heavily on social influences, where the focus is less on the number of relationships that a hopeful person has and more on the trustworthy qualities of those influential individuals to whom one calls on for help.

### *Hope as an Orientation*

Not only were the higher hope participants more oriented toward the future than their lower hope counterparts, but they believed that their future would always be better than what they had experienced in the past or the present. Indeed, the higher hoppers' overall perspective on life seemed to be much more positive, as evidenced by the greater number of positive references that I counted in their essays, the more frequent incidences of laughter that I noted during the interviews, and the participants' stated dislike of negative affect in themselves and others.

Two forms of orientation were thus in evidence among the higher hope cohort. First, they were more likely to think principally about the future and, in order to clarify what they wanted that future to be like, to draw on learning from the past as well as to contrast their imagined future with the present. That is, they were oriented toward making better connections between the past, present, and future. Second, the higher hope group seemed more oriented toward taking a positive perspective on life, in terms of actively choosing to be happy, and finding benefit even when outcomes did not meet their expectations.

There was, however, a key difference between the orientation to hope among the young adults in my study and those typically involved in studies conducted by nurse-researchers. For example, Dufault and Martocchio's (1985) model of hope articulated the difference between what they called *particularized hope* and *generalized hope*. Particularized hope appears similar to what Godfrey (1987) termed *ultimate* or *aimed* hope, that is hope with a specific hope object, such as hoping for a positive educational or career outcome. Generalized hope, on the other hand, is more akin to Godfrey's (1987) discussion of *fundamental* or *absolute hope* that is commonly expressed as only having hope left or "hoping against hope." It was clear to me from these data that there was little

or no evidence of generalized or absolute hope among my participants. I considered that to be because the hope that nursing professionals tend to study, or that philosophers such as Frankl (1984) focused on, concern the kinds of extreme life circumstances from terminal illness to imprisonment in a Nazi death camp that were not remotely experienced by my sample. Additionally, my participants were younger than those taking part in nursing studies on hope, where many of the findings relate to older populations (Davison & Simpson, 2006; Dufault & Martocchio, 1985). Even nursing studies that have focused on children or adolescents have done so with samples of cancer patients (Hinds & Gattuso 1991; Hinds et al., 1999), children with disabilities (Wright & Shontz, 1968 cited in Farran et al., 1995), or bone marrow transplants (Artinian, 1984 cited in Farran et al., 1995). There were no issues of this magnitude among my participants. It appeared from these data, therefore, that generalized hope was less relevant to my sample, although it could be argued that the benefit-finding identified in Theme Five would undoubtedly contribute to finding solace in extreme circumstances that is suggestive of this form of hoping.

Further, there was a volitional element to hope that Aristotle alluded to in *Rhetoric*, when he wrote that the young “live for the most part in hope,” and that for them “everything can be hoped for” (Kennedy, 1991, p. 165). Volition, according to the definition proposed by Pintrich and Schunk (2002), is “the act of using the will” when pursuing “an individual’s desire, want, or purpose” (p. 20). According to Boekaerts (2007), volitional strategies in educational contexts facilitated the ability of students to switch between a “growth pathway” that enhanced perceptions of competence, and a “well-being pathway” that led to self-image (p. 39). Boekaerts (2007) listed a number of such volitional strategies, including removing distractions so that one can focus on the task, regulating negative self-talk, looking for evidence of strengths, and holding off taking further action in order to think about how to overcome obstacles. All of these volitional strategies were in evidence in my data.

This volitional aspect of hope was found also by Hinds (1984) in her study using grounded theory methodology with adolescents aged between 13 and 17 years, who were

undergoing treatment for either alcohol or drug abuse. One of the factors in Hinds' (1984) definition of adolescent hope was "forced effort: the degree to which an adolescent tries to artificially take on a more positive view" (p. 360). This strongly suggests that having a positive orientation is not necessarily inherent in higher hope individuals but that it is something they willfully cultivate, a finding that certainly has a bearing on the potential for learning how to increase one's level of hope.

Within my own data, the volitional aspect of hope was certainly apparent. For example, Tamara had told me about watching the other children playing at school, and that although she was being beaten by her father at that time had determined "I wanted to be one of those and I saw how happy they were so it's like, *I have to be happy*" (my italics). Honora had talked also about having to take action and making herself "take my boys to daycare or find a ride, and I just have to do it to get a better life. I have to." As a final example, Helen told me she preferred to think of herself as willing things to happen, rather than hoping that they did. Indeed, the following exchange helps to differentiate the social relationships inherent in the hoping process, and the more volitional aspects found within the orientation part of hope.

I gotta see hope as, like, things have to come together in order for hope to happen, and then if you make things happen it's like willing things. Like, I hope I can go out tonight with my friends, but in order for me to do that either somebody would have to offer to babysit him...out of the blue they would have to offer to buy my food or drinks or whatever. But if I'm, like, "Yeah, I'll make that happen," then I will find a babysitter, I will put aside enough money so I can go out.

It therefore appeared from these data that the lack of existentially challenging circumstances facing the participants in my study precluded a need for the generalized hope that is more typically addressed by nurse-researchers and philosophers. These participants' arguably more mundane challenges in life, such as making friends in college or finding agencies to pay for childcare, combined with their youthful energy and determination, appeared to elicit a volitional quality around hoping that enabled the higher hope group to view challenge and difficulty in a very different way from their lower hope counterparts. In this respect, it seems, Aristotle was only partly right. If hope



was truly a characteristic of all young people for whom “everything can be hoped for” (Kennedy, 1991, p. 165), then I would have been less likely to find such different levels of hope among the young adults participating in this study. I suggest, therefore, that a potentially fruitful avenue of research would be to investigate the association between hope and volitional strategies, including those identified in Boekaerts’ (2006) dual processing model of self-regulation. In particular, it might be illuminating to discover when and how a hopeful young person shifts from relying on the educational and career values, goals, and actions modeled by others to assuming more personal responsibility for these over time.

I now turn to the question posed by Peterson and Seligman (2004) who asked what benefits there might be from hoping, over and above the absence of fear, despair, and negative thinking. As my data have helped to illustrate, there are many advantages to both the process of hoping, and to having a hopeful orientation. With respect to the various strategies that the higher hope participants engaged in, including goal-setting, the planning of alternatives, and taking effortful action to achieve their educational, career, and general life goals, it seemed that these strategies had not only enabled them to be highly effective at accomplishing certain goals in the past, but would continue to do so in the future.

The higher hoppers also appeared to have much more personally satisfying, close relationships built on mutual trust than their lower hope counterparts. Their overall orientation toward believing that their future would be better than their past, arguably would also attract more people toward them. Further, the many character strengths that the higher hope participants exhibited, such as their interest and openness to experience, courage and persistence, social intelligence, sense of responsibility, self-regulation, and humor would have additional social benefits. Last, but certainly not least, the ability of the higher hope young adults to seek and find benefit within experiences that did not conform to their original goals would indeed inoculate them against overwhelming fear or, in more extreme circumstances, despair.

To summarize this section, I will now review the research questions that guided my inquiry, namely:

- 1) What are the different ways in which higher and lower hope participants think about and connect their past, present, and future?

As mentioned previously, the higher hope participants were not only more inclined to think principally about their futures, but they tended to be better able to clarify their desired future change by reviewing the lessons they had learned from the past. Additionally, they were both realistic about, but generally dissatisfied with, their current circumstances. As such the higher hope individuals appeared to be better positioned to make connections between the past, present, and future.

- 2) What is the relationship between levels of hope and social connectedness? How is that social and contextual relationship manifested in terms of the number and nature of relationships with parents or caregivers, friends, and significant others?

As both the quantitative and qualitative data have suggested, there was a strong direct relationship between hope and social connectedness. This appeared to have less to do with the number and nature of the participants' relationship with others, and more to do with the level of trust they experienced in those relationships, together with the propensity to seek out and ask for help either at the micro (e.g., family) or macro (e.g., social services) levels.

- 3) How do the higher and lower hope groups differentially view challenge and adversity and, in determining what is or is not possible for them, how does this influence the educational and career goals they choose to pursue?

The higher hope cohort did not allow feelings of fear or low control to inhibit them from taking action to change their circumstances. They tended to perceive challenge and adversity as offering some form of benefit, even if that was simply that they had tried to effect the desired change. Additionally, the higher hope individuals appeared more inclined to pursue educational and career goals that represented core values and this appeared to increase their motivation to meet potential challenges head-on. This approach

was supported in part by having back-up plans that would move them toward some success, even if it was not the original goal they had envisioned.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Although the pilot project that I conducted prior to the main study enabled me to iron out potential problems with the design and implementation of this research, there remained a number of limitations. The first of these concerned the generalizability of these findings. Most of my participants were born in or close to the city in which the study was conducted, therefore the model of hope that emerged from their interview data may not be fully representative of individuals from other parts of the United States or other Westernized cultures. Certainly, I cannot be confident that this model represents hope as it is viewed in non-Western cultures, given the previously-mentioned “cross-cultural variations” concerning hope identified by Averill et al. (1990, pp. 71-89).

I was comforted, however, to discover that two separate studies conducted by nursing scholars, one within the United States among adolescents with cancer (Hinds, 2004), and the second a phenomenological study with Australian young people aged between 18-25 years (Turner, 2005), reported strong similarities with my findings. For example, Hinds’ (2004) component labeled “expectations of a better tomorrow” (p. 928) and the realistic basis of her participants’ hoped-for goals conformed to my own findings. Additionally, Turner (2005) reported that her participants exhibited “a sure and confident belief that life would go well” (p. 510), they felt strongly connected to others, and “had options and choices to change” (p. 511) that similarly reflected aspects of my model.

Nevertheless, the participants in this study were all self-selected in that they chose to take part in this research, both in terms of completing the packets during the quantitative part and being willing to be interviewed for the qualitative part. I made no contact with any participant who indicated on their demographics sheet that they did not wish to be interviewed. Therefore, although different levels of higher and lower hope and social connectedness were represented throughout this study, these self-selected participants may have differed in some way that I did not capture, and hence were not fully representative of a general population.

A second limitation of this study concerned the relatively short amount of time I spent with each participant. This was not designed to be a longitudinal study, and certain practical issues concerning this sample likely would have prevented me from being involved with these participants over an extended period of time. Nevertheless, I had to infer much from the interview data, not least that the higher hope individuals would achieve their education, career, and other aspirations and over time live happier and more successful lives than their lower hope peers. In future studies, therefore, I would aim ideally to become more involved in the lives of my participants and gather data over a period of years rather than months.

A third limitation concerned the potential differential effect of academic achievement between the groups. One difference between members of the lower hope and “changer” groups and their higher hope peers, for example, was their graduation rate. As can be seen from Table 4.1 on page 94, four out of the six participants from the former groups had failed to graduate on time and my later understanding was that three of these lower hope or “changer” participants were still attempting to graduate from high school. In comparison, as can be noted from Table 4.2 on page 124, although Harmony and Hector had failed to graduate on time, they subsequently did so and were now attending college. That only left Honora whose graduation appeared to be continually delayed because of pregnancies. Although I agree with Snyder (1994, 2002) that a person’s intelligence does not denote their level of hope, it could be argued that an inability to accomplish a socially important goal such as graduating from high school on time was a factor that might have affected the participants’ levels of hope and warrants further investigation. Certainly, future studies might investigate the possible relationship between lower levels of hope and high school dropout or failure to graduate on time, and hence the potential for lower hope to affect detrimentally educational attainment or vice versa.

As a researcher engaged in grounded theory analysis, I cannot exclude myself as a potential limiting factor in this study. I trust that the large quantity of transcript data included in Chapters Four and Five conveys a sense of authenticity and honesty in the

way the participants responded to me. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that I was very different from them in terms of my age, nationality, and level of education, and this may have resulted in my collecting data that was in some way different from what these participants were really thinking and feeling. Additionally, because of these demographic factors, I may have interpreted data differently from other researchers, although, as stated in Chapter Three, I attempted to reduce this with both member checking and periodic peer review of these data. However, I acknowledge that given the high number of Hispanic young adults participating in this study, some of these might have responded differently or more openly had I shared their cultural identity and hence been better able to understand the racism and other social challenges that they may additionally have faced.

As a penultimate issue concerning limitations, I recognize that despite imagining that my approach was completely free of bias or any single perspective, I was strongly informed by my affiliation with the positive psychology movement and the attendant perspective on strengths. As such, it could be argued that mine is a model of higher levels of hope rather than hope generally. This was certainly a challenge that I became more aware of after describing the model to members of my educational psychology cohort, when I came to realize that for hope to manifest itself through the various themes of my model, an individual had to be willing to move beyond Theme One. That is, the individual had to be, at least temporarily, comfortable with their negative emotions, sense of low control, and the ambiguity of the outcome, and to take action despite those thoughts and feelings as well as hold onto a trust in themselves and others.

Finally for this section, I think one of the most important limitations for this study as well as others that rely on quantitative data to sample purposively interviewee participants, concerned the use of self-report instruments. During the cognitive interviews that I conducted as part of the second interviews with some participants, it became obvious that many of the items developed for the Bruininks Hopefulness Measure (BHM) and the Social Connectedness Scale-Revised (SCS-R) were not interpreted by my

participants in the way that the scale developers had either anticipated or intended. I offer the following three examples.

### ***Reversed Item, Positive Interpretation***

Item #15 from the Social Connectedness Scale-Revised read, “I catch myself losing a sense of connectedness with society.” This was a reversed scored item, implying that this was not a view that would be held by someone who felt socially connected. Hilary, the participant who scored the highest on hope at the first implementation of these measures and whose interview data suggested that she was highly socially connected “strongly agreed” with that statement, however. When I asked her what her rationale had been, she replied:

The majority of the things that I see are negative and I really don’t feel connected with the negative things any more that I used to. Because of a lot of the things that I experience and see in society I don’t...I just don’t get enough, like, positive experiences so I really do find myself feeling not connected with it, but it’s not necessarily a bad thing because I don’t want to be <laughs>.

### ***Short Term or Long Term?***

Henry expressed a general difficulty with self-report instruments that simply asked respondents to “indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement,” as the instructions for the Hopefulness Scale indicated. For example, item #1 on that measure read, “When times are tough, I believe that better things are coming.” Henry indicated that he would answer that item differently depending on whether he was thinking about the short term or the long term.

Because the answer to that question is, when times are tough immediately in the short term, no I don’t think that things are going to be better so I would “strongly disagree.” Like, I have these really, really, really bad thoughts. However, as time goes on and time can mean a day, a couple of hours, the next time I get to talk to somebody just to get into the world outside of my head...the answer then would be “strongly agree” after the time has gone by.

Indeed, Henry went on to point out a number of items on the Hopefulness Scale that would cause him similar problems. It appeared that when left to himself, his

immediate response to some of the items on this measure would be opposite to what would be expected of a higher hope individual, such as agreeing to reversed scored item #3 that, “When a situation has me down it is difficult for me to believe that everything will work out.” Once Henry had an opportunity to talk about a problem with someone else, however, that put him in a better frame of mind and he would be then more likely to disagree with item #3. This once again demonstrates the strong mutual relationship between hope and social connectedness.

### *Change the Context, Change the Rating*

The first group implementation of these measures for the peer educator group had taken place on a Saturday morning at a recreation center where they were holding informal team meetings. When I asked Helen, one of the peer educators, to complete the measures for a second time she did so alone, during a weekday at the office where she worked. These different contexts apparently had an effect on how she responded to a number of items on the SCS-R, including #5, “I fit in well with new situations.”

(First administration)...I think this was the day I was going out on a date with that guy. I'd just been introduced to this whole group of friends...and it was really great and he asked me out and I just felt like, yeah, I can fit in well with new situations. And I guess maybe here (second administration) I've been put in a lot more work situations where maybe I don't feel that I fit in as well, because a lot of people are older and have degrees.

To summarize with respect to the limitations posed by the use of self-report instruments in this study, the degree to which these measures captured other participants' true scores may have been similarly affected by issues such as those mentioned above. This emphasizes the importance of not using an arbitrary cut-off point such as a median split when categorizing participants into higher or lower hope groups. In my studies I ensured that there was at least one standard deviation difference in scores, so that the higher hope group would not become inadvertently populated with lower hope individuals, or vice versa.

The next section further discusses the challenges of using only self-report data to explicate fully a construct as complex and multi-dimensional as hope. Additionally, I articulate how, by affording hope a more central role in psychological inquiry, scholars and researchers might help to better integrate other psychological theories.

### **Theoretical Implications**

This new inductively-derived model of hope has implications both for how we capture hope among different populations, and the extent to which hope needs to be recognized as central to psychological inquiry. I address the methodology issue first, particularly as this furthers the argument made in the previous section that using self-report measures alone is an unsuitable means by which to identify a person's level of hope.

### ***Measuring Hope***

The biggest problem I see with using self-report instruments to measure a highly complex, multi-dimensional construct like hope is that such use pre-supposes that the instrument developer has accounted for hope's many facets. After all, if the conceptualization of hope from which such an instrument is developed is incomplete, then the instrument itself will fail to capture the full nature of the construct it purports to measure. As Elliott and Olver (2002) have pointed out, in everyday language hope takes the form of a noun, a verb, an adjective (*hopeful*), and an adverb (*hopefully*). Yet, the measurement of hope through the use of self-report instruments has tended to suggest that hope is a noun or thing to be captured, while largely overlooking the fact that its most common form in language is as a verb (Leech, Rayson, & Wilson, 2001).

As my model of hope (see Figure 4 on page 186) illustrates, hope involves cognitions, affect, motivational impulses, volitional strategies, as well as combining both intrapersonal and interpersonal factors. It is therefore not surprising that in conceptualizing hope principally as "cognitively driven" (Elliott & Olver, 2002, p. 184), Snyder (1994, 2002) failed to pay sufficient attention in his model to the emotional or social factors (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002) that have been captured by explications of hope



provided in the nursing literature. Within that literature, arguably more than through psychological studies, there has been a greater appreciation of the need to use qualitative methodologies such as semi-structured interviews, in order to capture the “depth and breadth” (Farran et al., 1995) of hope.

Additionally, there are attendant problems if psychologists continue to draw, as is commonly the case, only on studies within our own domain and ignore the important work being conducted on hope in clinical settings. For example, in their otherwise excellent critique of Snyder’s hope model, Aspinwall and Leaf (2002) ask, “How does hope work when people face unsolvable problems?” (p. 282), particularly given Snyder’s (1994, 2002) strongly individualistic, goal-focused approach. I would suggest that the nursing literature, as well as philosophical explications, have already answered that question. In conditions where an individual’s perceived control over adverse conditions is so low as to render action impossible or inappropriate, that is when the generalized form or faith-based hope becomes salient, thereby allowing the individual to stop taking goal-focused action that simply sets them up for failure.

In sum, then, for the first part of this section on the theoretical implications of my model for future hope research, I suggest that psychologists should more enthusiastically investigate the value of mixed methods or wholly qualitative approaches, particularly given that hope is one of those words representing “shorthand abbreviations for complex expressions” (Wierzbicka, 1972, cited in Kövecses, 1990, p. 12) and therefore not fully amenable to quantitative methodologies. In particular, given the importance of first establishing those situations in which *to hope* is appropriate “scale devisers run the risk of distancing hope from its context of use, from everyday parlance” (Elliott & Olver, 2002, p. 190), thereby contributing little about hope that can be understood or used in laypersons’ terms.

### ***Hope as Central to Psychology***

The increasing number of correlates with which hope has been associated, principally by psychologists using self-report instruments, has prompted Peterson and Seligman (2004) to “dub hope and optimism ‘Velcro constructs’ because everything

seems to stick to them for reasons that are not always apparent” (p. 577). To reiterate the point I have just made, I propose that if psychologists moved away from only using self-report instruments, particularly the eight-item measure developed by Snyder et al. (1991), then the “reasons” why hope is connected to so many other psychological constructs might become clearer.

I agree with Lazarus (1999) who articulated that “hope is so vital in our lives, it is remarkable that it has not been a center of theoretical attention and research in the social sciences” (pp. 675-676). I would go further and propose that hope is so intricately connected to most other psychological theories that by largely ignoring its value in psychological inquiry, we turn our back on a more complete understanding of how human beings successfully navigate the challenges that typically accompany everyday living. That hope is so important to psychological understanding is not so unreasonable to suggest, given that hope is one of the few constructs with an almost 3,000-year recorded history, spanning cultures ranging from ancient Greece to the present-day United States. Indeed, hope arguably has a much longer history, given Scioli and Biller’s (n.d.) observation that a 23,000-year old “spiritual burial” site found near Moscow at which two children were laid to rest “dressed in ivory jewelry and provided with weapons of mammoth bone,” may well be “as close as we will come to marking the dawn of a consciousness capable of entertaining the finitude of existence and need for a full experience of hope” (pp. 62-63).

I will propose why I think hope has not been given the psychological emphasis it deserves at the conclusion of this chapter. Meanwhile, I contend that further research into hope might not only help to clarify other theoretical constructs, but provide some sense of integration among them. Table 6.1 lists some theories to which the hope themes that emerged from my study, as well as the model generally, appear to be directly or tangentially connected. The selected theoretical constructs, some of which have been addressed within this dissertation more than others, were featured in the following three books: *Motivation in Education: Theory, research, and applications* (Pintrich & Schunk,

2002); *Positive Psychology in Practice* (Linley & Joseph, 2004); and *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (Snyder & Lopez, 2005).

In particular, I would like to give special mention to two constructs with which hope is frequently, yet erroneously, confused in order to clarify how hope is distinct from each. First is, *optimism*, a topic that I have addressed elsewhere but I believe requires further brief emphasis. I agree with Lazarus (1999) that although hope and optimism probably “overlap” (p. 672), that “Hope is not equivalent to an expectation of a favorable outcome...though it might depend on such an estimate.” I trust it has been made clear through these data that when presented with a challenging event with an uncertain outcome, these higher hope individuals initially experienced a negative reaction. Recall, for example, Henry’s admission made earlier in this chapter that when faced with a threat, his first reaction was to have “these really, really, really bad thoughts.” In contrast to the reported propensity for optimistic individuals to count their blessings rather than focus on their problems (Affleck et al., 2001), higher hope individuals differ in the sense of actively facing up to and transcending their problems, regarding them as blessings in disguise, and as opportunities for further character development. Given the overwhelming evidence between the difference between hope and optimism, I therefore would call upon my fellow psychologists to stop using these two constructs as if they were synonymous.

The second construct that I would like to feature briefly in relation to hope is *resilience*, but for different reasons. Resilience has been variously defined but is generally considered to represent “good adaptation under extenuating circumstances” (Masten & Reed, 2005, p. 76). Within the resilience literature, hope has long been considered one of the individual attributes or “protective factors” (Rutter, 1985), implicated in the ability of some individuals to achieve normative developmental tasks such as completing their education, getting a job, or maintaining close, personal relationships under extreme conditions of challenge and adversity. Thus, resilience has been expressed as an umbrella term describing a pattern of psychosocial competencies, with hope as one of the individual differences attributes believed to contribute to the process of being resilient. Researchers within that field have argued that it makes no

sense to investigate resilience outside of the presence of risk, conforming to my argument that hope can only be fully understood when viewed within the context of challenge and uncertainty.

A recent article by Tugade and Frederickson (2004), in which they applied the second author's broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions to understanding "psychological resilience" (p. 320), highlighted considerable similarities between that construct and the hope model I have described here. For example, Tugade and Frederickson (2004) found that resilient individuals used "positive emotions to rebound from, and find positive meaning in, stressful encounters" (p. 320), as well as to regulate their negative emotions. Additionally, their resilient participants pursued "novel and creative thoughts and actions" (p. 331), arguably sounding similar to the alternative solutions that the higher hope participants in my study used to ward off failure and maintain a sense of positivity.

The openness and flexibility, endurance and energy implied by the word *resilience* are all additional facets of hope. Are we not, then, talking about similar things? Could this be another example of the propensity of psychologists to invent new terms for old ideas, as Lazarus (1999) has implied? Reviewing the reference sections of various articles on resilience suggested that the use of this term in psychological contexts is less than five decades old, being an outgrowth of the ego resilience of Block and Turula (1963) that was later articulated as *psychosocial resilience* (Rutter, 1985; Werner & Smith, 1992). Certainly, I believe that resilience as it is narrowly conceived in terms of coping or bouncing back to maintain the status quo, is different to the hope that enables individuals to transcend their circumstances and change themselves. Nevertheless, as I have proposed elsewhere in this chapter, it would seem important to integrate these two literatures (hope and resilience) better, in the same way that we might identify the connections among other constructs by recognizing the role that hope has to play in many other separately investigated psychological processes.

**Table 6.1 Hope’s Relationship with Other Theoretical Constructs**

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Association with Hope Model</b>
Subjective well-being/happiness/life satisfaction	General model
Resilience (“a class of phenomena characterized by patterns of positive adaptation in the context of significant adversity or risk” – Masten & Reed, 2005, p. 75)	General model
Creativity	General model
Meaningfulness	General model
Appraisals (the intervening process between an event and the emotions that it elicits according to dimensions including: Expectedness; Situational state; Motivational state; Probability; Agency; Control etc. – also linked with Coping)	General model
Perceived control	General model
Attributions (three causal dimensions: events are attributed as a) stable or unstable over time; b) internally or externally controlled; and c) controllable or uncontrollable – Pintrich & Schunk, 2002)	General model
Social learning (“The major or basic modes of behaving are learned in social situations and are inextricably fused with needs requiring for their satisfaction the mediation of other persons” – Rotter, 1954, cited by Pintrich & Schunk, 2002, p. 146)	General model
Reality negotiation	Themes 1 & 2
Time perspective	Theme 2
Intrinsic/extrinsic motivation	Themes 2 & 3
Values	Themes 2, 3, & 4
Broaden-and-Build (“discrete positive emotions...broaden one’s thought-action repertoire, expanding the range of cognitions and behaviors that come to mind” – Tugade & Frederickson, 2004, p. 321)	Themes 2, 3, & 4
Self-efficacy (“What I believe I can do with my skills under certain conditions – Maddux, 2005, p. 278)	Themes 2, 3, & 4
Optimism	Themes 2, 3, 4, & 5
Self-regulation (the ability to regulate thoughts, emotions, and actions in the pursuit of desired outcomes)	Themes 3 & 4
Self-determination (behaviors including “learning to set goals, solve problems, make decisions, and advocate for one’s needs as well as by having opportunities to make choices and experience control in life” – Snyder & Lopez, 2005, p. 760)	Themes 3 & 4
Volition/will	Theme 3
Social comparison	Theme 4
Character strengths	Theme 4
Benefit-finding and reminding	Theme 5

All of the above connections, as well as the more general associations between hope, cognition, motivation, emotion, and volition, might prompt areas for continued research. For example, building on Boekaerts, de Koning, and Vedder's (2006) call for greater insight into the content of students' goals, how they negotiate multiple goals in educational contexts, as well as how they handle issues such as conflicting values underpinning those goals, I would propose two studies. The first might investigate the differences between the academic goals of students exhibiting higher levels of hope, compared with their lower hope counterparts. A second study might focus on the way in which different learning environments elicit the need for hope as opposed to optimism or self-efficacy, and how higher or lower hope individuals differentially navigate those environments.

The proposed model of hope, however, also has implications for practice, as I explain next.

### **Practical Implications**

As this hope model suggests, there are considerable advantages to increasing the levels of hope among young people, particularly with respect to their educational and career aspirations. Not least, higher levels of hope appeared to be associated with attendant strengths, assets, and inner resources including effort and perseverance, the ability to devise and pursue alternatives to important goals, and a positive orientation to life including a belief that the future can be better than the past or present. Fostering such strengths, assets, and inner resources in young people represents a relatively new focus for educators, however. Contemporary psychology, including educational psychology, has typically embraced a deficit perspective by focusing attention on "pathology, faults, and dysfunctions" (Jørgensen & Nafstad, 2004). As Yates and Masten (2004) have articulated, helping young people requires more than attempting to mitigate or alleviate negative experiences. Indeed, researchers operating from an ethos of positive psychology (e.g., Linley & Joseph, 2004; Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000; Snyder & Lopez, 2005) have argued that there is greater value in better understanding optimal functioning and what makes life good and meaningful for people, than continuing to focus only on what is

not working. Having developed this new, integrative hope model based on interview data with young adults whose lives were affected by uncertainty, difficulty, and enforced change, the potential exists to help others model such thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

I believe the educational climate in the United States is now open to practical interventions, such as might be developed from this hope model. Take, for example, the work of the Search Institute (<http://www.search-institute.org>) that has been instrumental in bringing the theoretical and practical importance of strengths-based youth development to the attention of educators (Scales, 1991, 1996; Scales & Leffert, 2004). This research body has identified 40 developmental assets, representing the “positive relationships, opportunities, competencies, values, and self-perceptions that youth need to succeed” (Scales & Leffert, 2004, p. 5). Studies conducted over the past decade suggested that combinations of these assets are associated with optimal youth behaviors, including engagement with school and academic success (Scales & Leffert, 2004). Many of these internal and external assets are redolent of the main themes and associated factors identified in my hope model, including social support, positive values, competencies such as planning and decision making, a sense of purpose in life, and a positive view of a personal future. As Scales and Leffert (2004) have articulated, however, there is currently a lack of understanding of how and why such assets work to effect positive outcomes. In relation to the point I made in the previous section about the centrality of hope in optimal psychological functioning, this research has responded to Scales and Leffert’s (2004) call to identify, “particular clusters of assets that theoretically may have greater impact than other assets on specific developmental outcomes” (p. xvi). Perhaps even more important for the development of practical interventions, I have proposed a model that illustrates how the various themes or “clusters of assents” are interconnected.

Additionally, the burgeoning interest in “character education” within school districts, including the one in my own geographical location, would benefit from utilizing the current hope model in terms of its apparent linkages with character skills of interest in instructional environments. These include “touchstone” skills such as courage, perseverance, responsibility, self-discipline, and trustworthiness identified as helpful in

reducing “disruptive behaviors requiring serious discipline” (retrieved from [http://www.austinisd.org/academics/docs/CharacterEd\\_2005\\_01\\_rev02.pdf](http://www.austinisd.org/academics/docs/CharacterEd_2005_01_rev02.pdf) on February 15th, 2008). Although the rationale for incorporating character education within the curricula tends to be couched in terms of avoiding negative behaviors, I would suggest that such a focus, particularly when aligned with the five themes that emerged from this study, would provide today’s young people with a very practical means by which to increase their success and well-being in school and beyond.

I believe this model has provided a more complete picture of how certain intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental factors work together to elicit, boost, and maintain an individual’s level of hope as they pursue personally important outcomes. Certainly, I can see how the model’s five themes separately or in concert could be seamlessly integrated into everyday teaching, providing students with lessons in hoping within courses focused on literature and history, or as part of projects within science and math, for example. Such hope-enhancing interventions move far beyond the goal-setting strategies of Snyder’s (1994, 2002) theory. For example, these data suggest that for some lower hope youth, it may be necessary first to address their issues of fear, fantasy thoughts, or backward-looking wishful thinking before attempting to enhance their levels of hope. Additionally, whereas the goal-focused interventions using the Snyder hope model as a framework, as reported by McDermott and Hastings (2000) and Edwards and Lopez (2000), may have resulted in significant results for first- through seventh-grade students, I would suggest that the increased challenge, change, and uncertainty experienced by older children, adolescents, and young adults would require a more comprehensive perspective on hope, such as is provided by the proposed model.

### **Final Comments**

Given that I have previously identified four scholarly explications of hope in Chapter Two, why do we need another one? Briefly, I would argue that Snyder’s (1994, 2002) narrow conceptualization of hope as goal-directed thinking does not fully represent the complexity of hope as it is experienced in lives filled with challenge and uncertainty. Indeed, I believe that the research presented here helps to demonstrate that hope does not



wholly reside within the individual but is a dynamic response that coordinates interpersonal and intrapersonal factors. Scioli and Biller's (n.d.) contribution to the hope literature is much more wide-ranging and integrative but nevertheless remains a theoretically derived approach, whereas this current model was inductively developed from the actual experiences of young adults. Further, the models explicated by Dufault and Martocchio (1985) and Penrod and Morse (1997) are focused on specific populations facing extreme life circumstances in contrast to the more everyday hope episodes articulated by the young people who participated in this study. As such, I would suggest that the current hope model makes an important contribution to understanding how people hope when faced with the challenges and ambiguities of everyday life.

I would now like to take this opportunity to reflect on what I have learned as a researcher and scholar from conducting this study. As such I am hopeful that my work might help to promote greater emphasis on integrating theories around core constructs such as hope.

Earlier I cited Lazarus (1999) who wrote with respect to hope that "it is remarkable that it has not been a center of theoretical attention and research in the social sciences" (pp. 675-676). Over the three years that I have been researching hope, I have often wondered why Hoy et al. (2006) chose to write about *academic optimism*, that they described as "a sense of the possible," echoing Lynch's (1965) definition of hope. Or why Taylor (1983) proposed her "theory of cognitive adaptation" whose three themes: "a search for meaning in the experience, an attempt to regain mastery over the event in particular" and "to feel good about oneself again despite the personal setback" (p. 1161), were also consistent with the hope process. Or, more recently, why Schneider (2001) proposed the search for "realistic optimism," that involved "meaning, knowledge, and warm fuzziness" (p. 250) and many other facets redolent of hope. Indeed, in the same journal *American Psychologist* a year earlier, Peterson (2000) had penned an article on "The Future of Optimism" in which he articulated that "Optimism as a research topic has flourished in the contemporary United States precisely while people in general have become more hopeful about the future" (p. 44). Such blurring of conceptual boundaries

and the seeming preference for studying optimism ignores Lazarus' (1999) postulation that "with respect to most criteria for successful adaptation, hope is more important than optimism" (p. 673).

As Seligman (1990) has candidly expressed, "Hope has largely been the province of preachers, of politicians, and of hucksters" (p. 48), the latter group presumably referring to those guilty of spreading so-called "false hope" (Polivy & Herman, 2000, p. 128). Yet hope has a millennia-long history quite apart from being designated a Christian virtue, its value is increasingly being recognized in the classroom and not just on the campaign trail, and when hope is as realistic and transcendent as was shown through the lives of the current participants, just how "false" can it be said to be?

To conclude, if we are to do justice to complex constructs like hope, then we need to overcome the tendency to research such constructs in isolation. Although I can understand why scientific inquiry seeks to isolate those things it wishes to study in an effort to exclude extraneous variables, that approach applied to the study of hope has resulted in this rich, multi-dimensional, and "vital" experience being reduced to little more than goal-directed thinking, or considered synonymous with confident optimism. I do not believe that such cognitions are enough to sustain us when we are attempting to mitigate fear and ward off despair. Hence I would argue that scientific parsimony hinders rather than helps when studying what works in peoples' lives, including the value of hope.

At the core of today's positive psychology movement is the need to understand better how people can be happier. Joseph Addison (1672-1719) the English essayist, poet, and politician proposed a solution when he said that there were "three grand essentials to happiness in this life: something to do, something to love, and something to hope for" (retrieved from [http://quote.robertgenn.com/auth\\_search.php?authid=525](http://quote.robertgenn.com/auth_search.php?authid=525) on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008). It is my fervent desire that the model introduced in this document be used to facilitate the development and maintenance of hope among young people who are facing lives of challenge and uncertainty, and thus have great need of this vital resource.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

# Got goals?



## Participate in a research study and earn at least **\$10.00!**

### What is the research study about?

A researcher from the Department of Educational Psychology, the University of Texas at Austin, is interested in the thoughts and feelings about education and career goals of 18-22 year olds living in Austin, Texas.

### What do I have to do?

- 1) Attend a one-hour session (exact date to be announced shortly) to be held at this location between XXX, at which you will be asked to sign a consent form and then complete a packet of materials-- one demographic form, a 15-minute written assignment, and two short questionnaires. You will receive \$10 for this participation.
- 2) Indicate whether you would be willing to participate in up to four hours' worth of follow-up interviews (to be held March through July 2007) for which you will be paid \$10 per hour, and whether you agree in principal to these interviews being audio-taped.

### Have any questions?

Please contact (*insert here the name and contact number of relevant organization administrator*) or the UT researcher, Elizabeth Alexander, 512 762 0435 (cell) or [esalexander@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:esalexander@mail.utexas.edu).

## Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire

Your name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

1) What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_ years

2) What is your gender? (please circle as appropriate)

*Female*                      *Male*                      *Transgendered*

3) What is your ethnicity (please circle as appropriate)

*White/Caucasian*  
*Black/African American*  
*Latino/Mexican American/Hispanic*  
*Native American*  
*Asian/Pacific Islander/Asian American*  
*Other (please print):* \_\_\_\_\_

4) Where were you born (city/state/country)?

\_\_\_\_\_

5) What is your current partnership status? (please circle as appropriate)

*Single/Dating*  
*Married*  
*Unmarried but living with partner*  
*Divorced*  
*Other (please print):* \_\_\_\_\_

6) How many children do you have? (please circle as appropriate)

*Pregnant*    *0*        *1*        *2*        *3*        *4*        *5*        *6*        *more than 6*

7) What kind of employment do you have? (please circle as appropriate)

*No employment*  
*Part time employment*  
*Full time employment*

8) What are your parents'/caregivers' occupations?

**Father:** (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

**Mother:** (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

**9) What is your parents or caregivers' highest level of education? (please circle as appropriate)**

**Father/male caregiver:**

*Did not complete high school*

*GED*

*High school diploma*

*Some college*

*Bachelors/Associates degree*

*Graduate degree*

**Mother/female caregiver:**

*Did not complete high school*

*GED*

*High school diploma*

*Some college*

*Bachelors/Associates degree*

*Graduate degree*

**10) Which of the following best describes your religious views? (please circle as appropriate)**

*No religion*

*Conservative Protestant (e.g. Southern Baptist; Church of Christ; Pentecostal)*

*Modern Protestant (e.g. Unitarian; Episcopalian; Methodist)*

*Catholic*

*Eastern religions (e.g. Buddhist; Muslim; Hindu)*

*Jewish*

*Non-denominational (e.g. Community Church)*

*Alternative religions (e.g. New Age; Pagan; Wiccan)*

*Atheist or Agnostic*

*Spiritual but not religious*

*Other (please specify/print) \_\_\_\_\_*

**If you indicated on the consent form that you would like to take part in follow-up interviews, for which you will be paid \$10 per hour for four hours total, please give as many ways to be contacted as possible:**

*Home phone number: \_\_\_\_\_*

*Cell phone number: \_\_\_\_\_*

*Email address: \_\_\_\_\_*

*Mailing address (including zip code): \_\_\_\_\_*

## Appendix C: Bruininks Hopefulness Scale

**Directions:** Please read each statement CAREFULLY. Using the scale below as a guide, write the number beside each statement that indicates how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Agree Strongly  
Disagree nor Disagree Agree Agree

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. When times are tough, I believe that better things are coming.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. When I want something to happen, I spend a lot of time imagining how it might occur.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. When a situation has me down, it is difficult for me to believe that everything will work out.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Even when life is at its worst, I remain in good spirits.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. My friends often have to encourage me to get what I want, because without their support I would give up.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. When everything looks bad, I still believe that circumstances can turn around for the better.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. In a bad situation it is difficult for me to imagine that things will improve.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I tend to cease all labor when I realize things are not turning out as planned.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. When waiting for a positive outcome to occur, I spend a lot of time thinking about how it could happen.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. When faced with unpleasant circumstances, I look forward to when things will be better.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. When faced with possible failure, I need evidence that I will succeed in order to believe that I will.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. When times are tough, I am often seen as the person who raises others' spirits.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I feel something good can come out of a bad situation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I do not feel as though a situation will get better unless I am given a positive sign.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Even if I want something very badly, I tend to give up if I think I may not get it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. It is difficult for me to suppress my negative feelings during a challenging period.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I often feel despair when faced with demanding circumstances.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. When the road ahead seems unclear, others look to me to point out the positive.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I remain positive even during the most difficult times.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. When an outcome is uncertain, I imagine many ways it could turn out well.

## Appendix D: Social Connectedness Scale – Revised

**Directions:** Following are a number of statements that reflect various ways in which we view ourselves. Rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale (from 1=Strongly Disagree to 6= Strongly Agree). There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time with any one statement and do not leave any unanswered.

1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	6-----
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Mildly Disagree</b>	<b>Mildly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

- \_\_\_ 1. I feel comfortable in the presence of strangers
- \_\_\_ 2. I am in tune with the world
- \_\_\_ 3. Even among my friends, there is no sense of brotherhood/sisterhood
- \_\_\_ 4. I fit in well in new situations
- \_\_\_ 5. I feel close to people
- \_\_\_ 6. I feel disconnected from the world around me
- \_\_\_ 7. Even around people I know, I don't feel that I really belong
- \_\_\_ 8. I see people as friendly and approachable
- \_\_\_ 9. I feel like an outsider
- \_\_\_ 10. I feel understood by the people I know
- \_\_\_ 11. I feel distant from people
- \_\_\_ 12. I am able to relate to my peers
- \_\_\_ 13. I have little sense of togetherness with my peers
- \_\_\_ 14. I find myself actively involved in people's lives
- \_\_\_ 15. I catch myself losing a sense of connectedness with society
- \_\_\_ 16. I am able to connect with other people
- \_\_\_ 17. I see myself as a loner
- \_\_\_ 18. I don't feel related to most people
- \_\_\_ 19. My friends feel like family
- \_\_\_ 20. I don't feel I participate with anyone or any group

## Appendix E: Written Assignment

Please type on a computer your response to the assignment outlined below, **for no longer than 15 minutes**. Try and type continuously for the whole time. Don't worry about grammar, sentence structure, or spelling – the goal in this assignment is to explore in your writing the way your mind works naturally.

**MAKE SURE YOU TYPE THE CODE NUMBER THAT IS PRINTED ON THE FRONT OF YOUR PACKET AT THE TOP OF YOUR FIRST PAGE.**

Once you have finished this assignment please save your work to the desktop as “Goals\_(your unique code number).” Please ask the researcher if there is anything you are unsure about. She will be responsible for emailing this document to her UT mailbox and then deleting this essay from the desktop and trash.

The topic to write about is:

“I'd like you to consider what your thoughts and feelings are at this moment. Please write about these thoughts and feelings as they come to you. For example, you might explore what is going on in your life right now and how you think and feel about your education, relationships with family and friends, your work, or anything else.”

Thank you.



## Appendix F: Substantive Frame for Main Study Interview Sessions

### First main group interviews:

1. To start with, I'd like you to talk to me about your school experience, including why you dropped out of high school. Generally speaking, did you enjoy school? What did you like best about it? What did you not like? Can you describe a specific time when you a) especially enjoyed being at school, b) did not like being at school? Are those examples fairly typical of your school experience, or more exceptional?
2. Let's talk more generally now. I'd like to know how satisfied you are with your life at the moment. Can you tell me about a recent highlight? What are you not happy about right now? How does that make you feel?
3. Tell me about your current employment (if applicable)? What kind of work do you do (or would like to do, if not currently employed)?
4. What do you like best/least about your job? Tell me about a time that illustrates that. Is this job something you want to do for a good while/the rest of your life? If yes – why is that?
5. If no – what do you want to do that's different in the future? Why is that of interest to you? What do you need to do to make that happen, do you think? What kinds of qualifications or skills might you need?
6. How important is that career goal to you?
7. How long will it take you to achieve that goal, do you think?
8. What kinds of obstacles might you encounter in meeting that career goal? Can you give me an example of when you faced barriers to a goal you had in the past? How did you handle that experience? What do you think you learned from that experience?
9. How often do you feel afraid that you are not going to be able to achieve something that's important to you? How do you cope with those feelings?
10. Aside from the career goals we just discussed, how else do you see your life being different in the future? In what ways do you expect things to be pretty much the same as now, or quite different? Please describe that to me in as much detail as you can. Can you talk about how that makes you feel?
11. How certain are you that your life will turn out as you want it to? Tell me a little more about that.
12. How much control do you feel you have over how your life develops? Tell me a little more about that.
13. Would you say that generally things tend to turn out the way you want them to? Please give me an example of when they did/did not. How did that experience make you feel?
14. I'd like you to think about something you've already achieved that was important to you...please describe how you went about making that goal a reality...How confident were you that you would achieve what you wanted? What other kinds of thoughts and feelings were involved in that experience?

15. Who do you turn to for help at times like that? What kinds of help do they give you?  
Please describe a particular situation that shows that help.
16. Who would you say has been the most influential person in your life? Why is that – can you give me an example of how they have influenced you? What did you achieve that you could directly attribute to their influence?
17. What would you say was the most important goal in your life right now?

**Second and subsequent main group interviews:**

- Ask if any major changes (good or bad) happened since the last time we talked.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> administration of hope and social connectedness – look for any major anomalies in scores
- Cognitive interview – ask about some of the responses to the two instruments
- Follow-up questions based on responses from 1<sup>st</sup> interview: (things I need to explore further, particularly topics from the first interview guide that maybe were not explored well enough)
- Questions based on getting more information about the “higher order” themes that have come out of my coding to date and appear to most differentiate the two groups (higher and lower hope): “Temporality” (focus mainly on past, present, or future?), “Strategies for goal pursuit,” “Personal strengths and community resources,” “Benefit-finding,” “Sense of meaning and purpose.”
- Can you tell me about a time when you felt hopeful? Please describe that experience to me in as much details as possible?

## Appendix G: Hold-Out Sample Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about some of the changes that have taken place since we last met and you were still in high school.
2. Questions about their current college experience: How would you describe your college experience at the end of your first semester? What's it like living away from home? What is your major? What do you intend to do with your degree? What work or career are you interested in and why?
3. What would you say is the most challenging or difficult thing you are facing right now? Tell me more about that.
4. In what ways have you needed to change to adapt to these new circumstances?
5. What kinds of things do you typically do to get yourself through challenging or uncertain circumstances? What kinds of things do you say to yourself? Please give me an example of that.
6. Where would you say your thoughts tend to be most – in the past, the present, or the future? Please give an example of that.
7. What is the most important thing for you at the moment? Why is that important?
8. Typically, where or who do you go to for emotional or practical support in relation to these kinds of important goals?
9. What does leading a “good” life mean to you?
10. Please think about something you wanted to happen in the past that you did not achieve exactly the way you wanted it to. Tell me how you dealt with that.
11. Can you tell me about a time when you felt hopeful? Please describe that experience to me in as much details as possible?

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