

# NOTE TO USERS

Copyrighted materials in this document have not been scanned at the request of the author. They are available for consultation in the author's university library.

145-153

This reproduction is the best copy available.

**UMI<sup>®</sup>**



THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE EFFECTS OF DISPOSITIONAL HOPE  
ON COPING WITH CAREER INDECISION  
IN A SAMPLE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

John Hurley, M.A.  
Norman, Oklahoma  
2004

UMI Number: 3122299

### INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

**UMI<sup>®</sup>**

---

UMI Microform 3122299

Copyright 2004 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.


ProQuest Information and Learning Company  
300 North Zeeb Road  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

© Copyright by John Hurley 2004  
All Rights Reserved.

THE EFFECTS OF DISPOSITIONAL HOPE  
ON COPING WITH CAREER INDECISION  
IN A SAMPLE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

BY




---

Cal D. Stoltenberg, Ph.D., Chair



---

Barbara Greene, Ph.D.



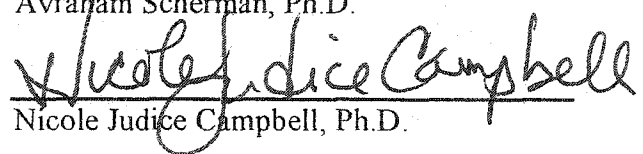
---

Jody Newman, Ph.D.



---

Avraham Scherman, Ph.D.



---

Nicole Judice Campbell, Ph.D.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation, as with any project of this size and scope, has not been the work of one person alone. With this in mind, I offer my appreciation to all five members of my dissertation reading committee for their incomparable guidance and support. I am especially grateful to my advisor, Dr. Cal Stoltenberg. Since I began tossing around possible ideas for a dissertation, his input has been invaluable. Apart from that, I have always enjoyed his company and humor and will miss having an excuse to interact with him on a regular basis.

As for the other members of my committee, I appreciate Drs. Barbara Greene, Jody Newman, Avi Scherman, and Nicole Judice Campbell for their intelligent and thoughtful feedback during all stages of this project. In addition, Dr. Nicole Judice Campbell merits a special “thank you” for her assistance in recruiting participants for this study. Thanks also go to Dr. Rick Snyder for his gracious permission to use the Trait Hope Scale in this study, as well as to Dr. Shane Lopez for his comments on an earlier draft of this project.

Finally, I thank my mother, Mrs. C.W. (Claudean) Harrison for her unwavering support and unconditional love throughout my life. As I receive my Ph.D. at the end of this semester, she can take a considerable share of the credit for this accomplishment, as I could never have reached the point of calling myself “doctor” without her. She has always been the “wind beneath my wings.” I am also grateful to my brother Tom and the rest of my family for their affection and faith in my abilities (especially during those times when my own self-confidence was faltering). Much love and thanks to all of you who helped to make this possible.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
ABSTRACT.....	ix
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Literature Review.....	2
Dispositional Hope.....	2
Historical Perspective.....	2
Basic Components of Snyder's Hope Theory.....	4
Empirical Support for Snyder's Hope Theory.....	8
Non-Specific Coping.....	14
Basic Components of Non-Specific Coping.....	14
Non-Specific Coping and Undergraduate Students.....	18
Career Indecision.....	22
Career Indecision: Basic Concepts.....	22
Career Indecision and Other Psychological Constructs.....	25
Literature Review Summary.....	28
The Present Study.....	31
Problem Statement.....	31
Statement of Purpose.....	31
Significance of the Study.....	32
Research Question and Hypotheses.....	33
Definitions of Terms.....	34
Overview of the Present Study.....	36



CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY.....	38
Sample.....	38
Protection of Human Participants.....	38
Instruments.....	39
Career Decision Scale (CDS).....	40
Reliability and Construct Validity.....	40
Criterion Validity.....	41
Coping Resources Inventory (CRI).....	42
Reliability and Validity.....	43
Trait Hope Scale (THS).....	43
Reliability and Validity.....	44
Data Collection.....	44
Treatment of Data.....	45
CHAPTER III: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	47
Demographic Information.....	47
Variable Relationships and Internal Consistency.....	48
Hypothesis 1.....	49
Hypothesis 2.....	51
Hypothesis 3.....	51
CHAPTER IV: GENERAL DISCUSSION.....	53
Hypothesis 1.....	53
Hypothesis 2.....	56
Hypothesis 3.....	57

Limitations.....	58
Directions for Future Research.....	59
Summary.....	61
REFERENCES.....	62
TABLES.....	79
APPENDICES.....	84
Appendix A: Dissertation Prospectus.....	85
Appendix B: Oral Description of Study.....	135
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form Returned to the Researcher....	137
Appendix D: Informed Consent Form to be Kept by the Participants.	139
Appendix E: Demographic Questionnaire.....	141
Appendix F: Career Decision Scale (CDS).....	145
Appendix G: Coping Resources Inventory (CRI).....	149
Appendix H: Trait Hope Scale (TRS).....	154
Appendix I: Permission to Use Trait Hope Scale.....	156
Appendix J: Debriefing Statement.....	158
Appendix K: Approval from University of Oklahoma IRB.....	160

## LIST OF TABLES

1.	Correlation Matrix of Hypothesis 1 Variables.....	79
2.	Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Career Certainty...	80
3.	Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Career Indecision..	81
4.	Correlation Matrix of Hypotheses 2 and 3 Variables.....	82
5.	Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting the Use of Approach Coping Responses in Choosing a Career.....	83

## Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to provide further evidence of the distinct ways by which dispositional hope affects career indecision and coping with vocational choice among undergraduate students. Using a sample of 320 college students enrolled in Introductory Psychology at a public university in a southwestern state, this study hypothesized that individuals high in dispositional hope and academic achievement were more likely to have made a decision about a career and to have used approach coping responses to resolve career indecision. Further, individuals high in dispositional hope and academic achievement were thought to be less likely to have used avoidance coping responses in the career decision-making process. Results indicated that college GPA and dispositional hope can be used to predict both career certainty and career indecision. In addition, both college GPA and dispositional hope can be used to predict the use of approach coping responses in making an occupational choice. On the other hand, the present study did not find any significant relationship between dispositional hope and the use of avoidance coping strategies, though career certainty and college GPA were found to be mildly associated with this variable. The implications of these results, as well as the suggestions for future research, are discussed.

# The Effects of Dispositional Hope on Coping with Career Indecision in a Sample of Undergraduate College Students

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Previous research has demonstrated that the decision to pursue a career is affected by characteristics within the individual (Gaffner & Hazler, 2002). Specifically, three factors thought to influence career indecision include self-efficacy (Betz & Voyten, 1997; Taylor & Betz, 1983), locus of control (Fuqua & Hartman, 1983; Lucas & Epperson, 1990), and anxiety (Fuqua, Newman, & Seaworth, 1988; Fuqua, Seaworth, & Newman, 1987; Hawkins, Bradley, & White, 1977; Kimes & Troth, 1974; Newman, Fuqua, & Seaworth, 1989; Peng, 2001).

Dispositional hope has been shown to be conceptually similar to self-efficacy and locus of control in that all three mediate the way future goals will be pursued (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991). Perceived as the integration of dispositional optimism and self-efficacy, dispositional hope is the pervasive conviction that a desired object is attainable. In other words, this overarching attribute is composed of two interrelated but distinct constructs: the belief that a particular objective can be met (i.e., optimism or agency) and the specific means and/or plan to acquire this end (i.e., self-efficacy or pathways; Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991).

Coping mechanisms have been demonstrated to facilitate the process of both successful goal acquisition (Chang, 1998; Snyder et al., 1991) and choosing a vocational option (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Moreover, coping mechanisms are often crucial in the manifestation of both of these processes, potentially allowing them to serve as a link between the thoughts and actions involved in goal fulfillment on the

one hand, and the psychological and interpersonal ramifications of career indecision on the other.

### Literature Review

This section will present the relevant conceptual and empirical findings of dispositional hope, non-specific coping responses, and career indecision. In order to accomplish this objective, the sections pertaining to non-specific coping and career indecision will be divided into two subsections: one describing the conceptual framework of the construct in question and the other delineating the empirical findings that support the rationale for the present research. The dispositional hope section will also follow this format; however, an additional section addressing the historical perspective of this construct will be included because of dispositional hope's seminal importance to the present study.

#### *Dispositional Hope*

*Historical Perspective.* Throughout history, the concept of hope and its effects on behavior has received considerable attention from theologians, writers, and others interested in the motivations that drive human endeavors. For example, Menninger (1959) pointed out that both the early Christian St. Paul and Reformation leader Martin Luther believed that hope is "the impetus behind everything that is done in the world" (p. 483). British author Samuel Johnson supported this belief by writing that hope is a necessary condition for all human actions, and the American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson posited that hope is the best judge of man's wisdom (Menninger, 1959).

Beginning in the 1950s, the therapeutic utility of hope came to the attention of several prominent psychiatrists (e.g., Frank, 1961, 1968; Frankl, 1963; Melges &

Bowlby, 1969; Menninger, 1959; Schachtel, 1959) and psychologists (e.g., Cantril, 1964; Farber, 1968; French, 1952; Lewin, 1951; Mowrer, 1960; Stotland, 1969). This increased scrutiny was likely the result of the optimism that prevailed in American society after World War II. This supposition is supported by Frank (1968) who offered that hope has the ability to inspire feelings of confidence and well-being. Further, hope can serve as the catalyst to accomplishment by encouraging favorable change in one's existence, "usually in relation to one's own actions or an anticipated environmental event" (Frank, 1968; p. 391).

Following these conceptual speculations, three teams of researchers in the 1970s and 1980s attempted to develop individual difference instruments that could use hope as a means to diagnose certain behaviors (Beck, Weissman, Lester, & Trexler, 1974; Gottschalk, 1974; Scheier & Carver, 1985). In constructing a hope scale applicable to verbal samples, Gottschalk (1974) found that hope was positively related to personal achievement and fulfilling human relations. In addition, hope was negatively associated with anxiety, overt and covert hostility toward others, hostility directed towards the self, social alienation, and personal disorganization. The instrument developed by Gottschalk (1974) was the first to detect a relationship between hope and other constructs that can affect emotional well-being. However, its external validity was limited because of its low reliability and qualitative approach to the assessment of hope.

At about this same time, Beck, Weissman, Lester, and Trexler (1974) borrowed from Stotland's (1969) hypothesis that the antithesis of hope (i.e., hopelessness) is often a global expectancy about the outcome of current actions. Based on this premise, a measure of hopelessness was formulated to predict various pathological behaviors

(Beck, Steer, Kovacs, & Garrison, 1985). This scale was perceived as an improvement over the Hope Scale of Gottschalk (1974) due to higher levels of interrater reliability and the ease with which its findings could be analyzed and manipulated using quantitative statistical methods. Though this scale was designed to measure the absence of hope, it can be considered the precursor to the Trait Hope Scale used in the present study. This is because its findings indicated that an individual's position on the hope/hopelessness continuum could provide empirically sound information about other aspects of their emotional and behavioral functioning.

Like the Beck Hopelessness Scale (Beck, Weissman, Lester, & Trexler, 1974), the scale developed to measure dispositional optimism by Scheier and Carver (1985) was germane to the formation of Snyder's Trait Hope Scale (THS; Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991). These measures are similar to each other in that both concentrate on potential individual differences as the reasons for discrepancies in outcome expectations. Further, it was effective in predicting responses to two health-related indices (Scheier & Carver, 1987; Strack, Carver, & Blaney, 1987) that were tested in the interval between its elaboration and the development of Snyder's Trait Hope Scale. Overall, these findings provided further support for the feasibility of quantifying a similar (though distinct) dispositional construct.

*Basic Components of Snyder's Hope Theory.* Snyder (1989) posited that the active process of hoping is one of the components that exemplify reality negotiation. Reality negotiation is "an overarching construct that potentially encompasses a multitude of potential psychological mechanisms by which people attempt to decrease their linkage to bad acts and increase their linkage to good acts" (p. 137). In the process



of this mediation, hope is an essential ingredient that can cause obstacles and difficulties to seem more tolerable as individuals seek to fulfill their life goals and plans (Snyder et al., 1991).

The generally accepted definition of hope stresses a belief in the possibility that something desired and actively pursued may actually come to pass (Snyder 1989; Snyder et al., 1991). Moreover, at the time the theory of dispositional hope was conceived, the body of psychological research contained virtually no information about how the different components of the hope construct interacted to produce hopeful/hopeless cognitions, affect, or behavior. Further, until the development of Snyder's Hope Theory (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991) it remained unclear how the thoughts, feelings, and actions that derive from the presence or absence of hope could be measured. This was despite the relative diagnostic utility of instruments that had been previously constructed to gauge this construct (i.e., Beck, Weissman, Lester, & Trexler, 1974; Gottschalk, 1974).

In developing his theory, Snyder (1989; Snyder et al., 1991) postulated that hope is a multidimensional construct that is composed of two interrelated components. First, hopeful thinking and actions are driven by the individual's belief that certain objectives can be accomplished (i.e., the agency component). Similar to dispositional optimism, this ingredient "refers to a sense of successful determination in meeting goals in the past, present, and future" (Snyder, et al., 1991, p. 570).

The second element of Snyder's Hope Theory refers to the degree to which hopeful perceptions are influenced by the anticipation that workable routes connected to desired goals are both available and feasible. This ingredient (i.e., the pathways

component) refers to a sense of efficacy in generating successful plans to meet goals (Snyder et al., 1991). Taken together, these two parts of Snyder's Hope Theory are reciprocal, additive, and positively related, though not synonymous. The reciprocity of hope is suggested by the action between the expectancy that a goal can be achieved (i.e., agency) and the belief that there are one or more possible ways to make this happen (i.e., pathways; Snyder et al., 1991).

Given the strength of the relationship between these two ingredients, it is obvious that both agency and pathways are considered necessary to the successful attainment of goals. In other words, in order for positive movement towards goals to occur, both a sense of agency and pathways must become activated (Snyder 1989; Snyder et al., 1991). Interestingly, hope is also conceptualized to be defined (and occasionally redefined) by each individual as they assess the plausibility of obtaining their objectives (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991).

Viewed from this perspective, hope is an egocentric idea that taps into an individual's belief in their sense of efficacy in relation to the achievement of either major or minor goals. While important external events and circumstances can invite a redefinition of their sense of effectiveness, it is ultimately left to the individual to interpret environmental cues and incorporate any alterations in perception into their cognitive, affective, and behavioral frameworks (Snyder et al., 1991).

Snyder et al. (1991) also theorizes that the quality of emotion for a specific goal depends on the person's perceived hope that this particular goal will be obtained. Since dispositional hope is by definition a global trait and consistent across situations and time, individuals generally can be defined as either high-hope or low-hope. High-hope

individuals are thought to assess a situation considered worthy of their efforts in terms of high agency and pathways. Consequently, these individuals perceive a relatively high chance of goal fulfillment and are more inclined to concentrate on the likelihood of success rather than on the prospect of failure. They are also more likely to possess a constructive sense of challenge and positive affect (e.g., personal satisfaction) as activities related to goal-attainment are conceived and implemented (Snyder et al., 1991).

On the other hand, some individuals can be classified as possessing a low-hope outlook on goal fulfillment. According to Snyder et al. (1991), these people harbor inadequate agency and pathways in seeking to meet desired goals. As a result of this outlook, there is likely a lower probability of goal attainment, a focus on the inevitability of failure rather than the feasibility of success, a pervasive sense of indifference and apathy concerning desired objectives, and a comparatively negative emotional state during goal-related activities (Snyder et al., 1991).

A comparison of the attributes of high- and low-hope individuals yields additional hypotheses about how they are likely to select goals to be achieved as well as address adversity when obstacles to goal fulfillment present themselves. Snyder et al. (1991) speculated that high-hope people are inclined to have more goals across the various areas of life (e.g., objectives pertaining to their family, friends, or occupation). Further, more difficult aims will probably be selected and attained due to their elevated degree of agency and pathways. There is also a stronger possibility that goals and any ensuing impediments will be perceived with a more problem-focused, constructive perspective (Snyder et al., 1991). In contrast, lower-hope persons are more apt to

decrease their agency and pathways (i.e., give up) when faced with formidable obstructions to successful goal accomplishment (Snyder et al., 1991).

In formulating his conceptualization of dispositional hope, Snyder and colleagues (1991) have distinguished this construct from similar but discrete individual difference variables, such as dispositional optimism (Scheier & Carver, 1985) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989). Specifically, dispositional hope is thought to differ from dispositional optimism primarily in the relationship between the outcome of goal attainment and the individual's perceived effectiveness in meeting their objectives. In other words, while dispositional optimism is similar to the agency component of Snyder's Hope Theory (Snyder 1989; Snyder et al., 1991), dispositional hope also involves planning and progress towards goals (i.e., pathways), a component that is missing from dispositional optimism (Snyder et al., 1991).

Hope is also different from Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1989) in that self-efficacy posits that expectancies based on personal recognition of effectiveness are crucial motivators for behavior. While this component resembles the pathways segment of Snyder's Hope Theory (Snyder 1989; Snyder et al., 1991), a complete utilization of the cognitive set requires both agency (i.e., optimism) and pathways (i.e., self-efficacy). Furthermore, by concentrating on only one of these facets, the ability of the construct(s) to predict subsequent goal-related activity is decreased (Snyder et al., 1991). Magaletta and Oliver (1999) have since empirically confirmed that these three constructs are related but not identical.

*Empirical Support for Snyder's Hope Theory.* Several quantitative research studies were conducted in the late 1980s in an attempt to provide empirical validation

for the assumptions of Snyder's Hope Theory (e.g., Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Langel, 1989; Yoshinobu, 1989). However, it should be noted at the outset that no gender differences have ever been found in the level of reported hope across any sample since the construction of Snyder's Trait Hope Scale (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002).

In examining the contributions of each of these studies, Anderson (1988) found that higher-hope (as opposed to lower-hope) students were more likely to set and strive for higher grades, to persist in their belief that higher grades continued to be feasible despite early feedback that conflicted with this view, and to actually achieve these higher grades. Harney (1989) provided additional support for this finding by demonstrating that Trait Hope Scale scores contribute unique variance in the degree to which higher-hope students attain high grades. Taken together, these findings led Snyder et al. (1991) to conclude that academic achievement is related to higher hope.

Two of these seminal studies also provided empirical support for specific components of Snyder's Hope Theory. Langel (1989) confirmed that the number of goals that an individual has across various domains has a positive relationship with their level of dispositional hope. In addition, Yoshinobu (1989) found that the degree to which a person sustains agency and pathways behaviors varies directly with their level of hope as measured by Snyder's Trait Hope Scale (Snyder, 1989).

Since this initial research, a person's amount of hope has also been found to predict their level of other individual difference variables. However, it appears from the findings of two particular studies that hope is more likely to affect the perception of physical injuries rather than the outcome of psychological problems (Elliott, Witty, Herrick, & Hoffman, 1991; Needles & Abramson, 1990). Specifically, the interaction

between depression, positive life events, and attributional style (Needles & Abramson, 1990) and the degree of depression and psychosocial impairment following an acquired physical disability (Elliott et al., 1991) were examined. In both cases, hope was found to potentially mitigate the effects of depression, though Needles and Abramson (1990) found that this was more likely to occur when the participants possessed both an enhancing attributional style and an increase in positive life events.

On the other hand, Elliott et al. (1991) discovered that the pathways component of Snyder's Hope Theory (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991) gradually tempers the level of sadness and impairment following the acquisition of a severe physical handicap. The authors concluded that the time elapsed since the physical trauma allowed the sufferer to develop effective solutions to problems developed earlier in the course of the injury (Elliott et al., 1991). Overall, the findings of these two studies suggest that the availability and feasibility of potential solutions to problems facilitate the degree of hope expressed, which is congruent with the basic assumptions of Snyder's Hope Theory (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991).

With regard to the mitigation of emotional states and personality attributes, Chang and DeSimone (2001) have found that dispositional hope is negatively related to dysphoria, suggesting that higher-hope individuals experience less sadness and depression. In addition, these authors found that dispositional hope predicted the presence of dysphoria independent of coping mechanisms used to address this problem. Further, higher-hope people have also been found to prefer listening to positive self-statements that engender increased self-esteem and positive affect (Snyder, LaPointe, Crowson, & Early, 1998) and to see themselves as possessing the power to shape their

own lives (Cramer & Dyrkacz, 1998). Generally speaking, these three studies suggest that dispositional hope has an effect on mood, affect, self-concept, and autonomy, which supports many of the basic assumptions about the effects of dispositional hope on psychological functioning (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991).

Dispositional hope has been found to effect the perception of obstacles of both employees and patients of the health-care system (Barnum, Snyder, Rapoff, Mani, & Thompson, 1998; Lewis & Kliever, 1996; Sherwin, Elliott, Rybarczyk, Frank, Hanson, & Hoffman, 1992), as well as the substance use practices of both adolescents (Carvajal, Clair, Nash, & Evans, 1998) and homeless veterans (Irving, Seidner, Burling, Pagliarini, & Robbins-Sisco, 1998). Specifically, Sherwin et al. (1992) found that dispositional hope was related to all three primary symptoms of burnout in registered nurses. Overall, these authors found that depersonalization and emotional exhaustion showed a negative association and personal accomplishment a positive association to dispositional hope, which lends credence to the belief that dispositional hope is the negative correlate to burnout (Sherwin et al., 1992).

In examining the relationship between dispositional hope, coping, and adjustment to sickle cell disease, Lewis and Kliever (1996) found that dispositional hope in children, like dispositional hope in adults, was unrelated to anxiety. Moreover, coping appeared to mitigate this finding, particularly when the specific strategies of active coping, seeking support from significant others, and distraction were utilized. Surprisingly, no significant relationship was detected between dispositional hope, coping, and functional adjustment, though the authors of this study postulated that this

could have been due to the child's lack of control over these factors (Lewis & Kliever, 1996).

Using a forced-entry regression analysis with children who have survived burn injuries and a matched control group, Barnum et al. (1998) discovered that dispositional hope made a significant contribution to the prediction of acting-out behaviors once variance attributable to social support had been accounted for. Though social support did not account for any unique variance above that credited to dispositional hope, this study concluded that both dispositional hope and social support contribute to global self-worth regardless of their order of entry into the regression equation. Further, dispositional hope alone was found to be a unique significant contributor to differences in externalizing behavior. Overall, these findings suggest that while self-concept can be affected by the belief that goals can be attained and by input from the environment, acting-out may serve as a means by which frustration over a lack of goal fulfillment is resolved.

Preventing substance abuse in adolescents (Carvajal et al., 1998) and maintaining abstinence in homeless veterans (Irving, Seidner, et al., 1998) are other problems that may be affected by dispositional hope. Carvajal et al., (1998) found that dispositional hope is negatively related to alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana consumption. Furthermore, this finding remained true even when demographic variables such as parental educational level, ethnic background, and gender were taken into account. Overall, a high degree of these variables were posited to protect children from future illicit substance consumption.



In examining the association between hope and recovery among substance abusing homeless veterans, Irving, Seidner, et al. (1998) found that transitory (i.e., state) hope has a positive relationship with abstinence from drugs and alcohol. In looking at the specific hypotheses of this study, the researchers found that higher amounts of state hope were linked to greater confidence in remaining sober, a higher degree of motivation to stop using drugs/alcohol, more social support from family and friends, and a better quality of life.

In recent years, the construct validity of Snyder's Hope Theory (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991) has also been confirmed in several studies that have used college student samples (e.g., Chang, 1998; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Irving, Snyder, & Crowson, 1998; Onwuegbuzie, 1998; Onwuegbuzie & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1999). Generally speaking, the results of these studies indicate that dispositional hope has a significant effect on the formation and implementation of solutions to problems concerning academic, athletic, health, and global psychological functioning.

Curry et al. (1997) found that differences exist in dispositional hope between college athletes and nonathletes. These authors also determined that dispositional hope (unlike self-esteem, confidence, and mood) is an effective and robust predictor of actual sport achievement. In addition, dispositional hope has been found to be significantly associated with statistical anxiety (Onwuegbuzie, 1998) and coping strategies under testing circumstances (Onwuegbuzie & Snyder, 2000). Interestingly, dispositional hope has also been found to be significantly related to the degree to which female college students acquire knowledge about cancer, as well as hypothesize about how well they would progress through the various stages of this disease (Irving, Snyder, et al., 1998).

In a study whose findings have a direct bearing on the current research project, Chang (1998) attempted to measure the relationship between hope, problem-solving ability, and coping in a college student population. Building on Snyder et al.'s (1991) finding of a significant association between dispositional hope and general problem-solving, Chang designed his research to examine relations between dispositional hope and more specific problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies. Requiring participants to concentrate on both an academic and an interpersonal difficulty, this study found that no significant differences exist between high- and low-hope individuals in addressing stressful interpersonal situations (Chang, 1998).

And yet, Chang (1998) did find that dispositional hope accounts for a significant segment of variance in both academic and interpersonal life satisfaction. This research also found that high-hope college students did report greater academic satisfaction, supporting the findings of Snyder et al. (1991). Low-hope college students were found to employ more emotion-focused coping strategies in dealing with stressful academic and interpersonal problems (Chang, 1998).

Overall, this study is crucially important to the present study in that it demonstrates that dispositional hope has a significant effect on the coping strategies used to resolve stressful academic and interpersonal situations. Further, Chang (1998) has shown that dispositional hope can be utilized to predict life satisfaction across different areas of functioning beyond that accounted for by coping mechanisms.

#### *Non-Specific Coping*

*Basic Components of Non-Specific Coping.* Non-specific coping (i.e., coping mechanisms not used exclusively to address or resolve any one distinct problem or

stressful situation) has been defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1985) as “the cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage (i.e., master, reduce, or tolerate) a troubled person-environment relationship” (p. 152). Above all, coping is characterized by change (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985) and has historically been perceived as a response to negative affect (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). Researchers have also posited that the individual’s specific coping response utilized in a time of stress directly affects the perceived ramifications of this event (Endler & Parker, 1990; Ganster, Fusilier & Mayes, 1986). Research has also demonstrated that negative affect (e.g., anxiety) can significantly interfere with coping (e.g., Krohne & Laux, 1982; van der Ploeg, Schwarzer, & Spielberger, 1984; Schwarzer, 1984; Spielberger, 1966, 1972). Furthermore, this occurs to the extent that individuals are not prepared to satisfactorily cope with events perceived as stressful (Arthur, 1993).

In addition to these empirical findings, research has also shown that more than one alternative for coping is likely to exist (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986) and that these different alternatives are neither distinct nor mutually exclusive (Cook & Heppner, 1997). As a result, more than one emotional response is possible (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988), as are a wider range of problem-solving strategies and emotional adjustments (e.g., Felton, Revenson, & Hinrichsen, 1984; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980, 1985; Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986; Folkman, Lazarus, Pimley, & Novacek, 1987; McCrae, 1982, 1984; Vitaliano, Russo, Carr, Maiuro, & Becker, 1985).

The construct of non-specific coping is thought to consist of two general types. The first type, known as problem-focused (or instrumental) coping, is directed at

problem-solving or other efforts intended to decrease the effects of external stress. The second type of coping, known as emotion-focused (or palliative) coping, is utilized to mitigate the influences of negative affect (e.g., anger, depression) that is related to or cued by a specific setting (Arthur, 1998; Lazarus & Folkman, 1980).

Typically, most stressful situations engender a combination of both problem- and emotion-focused coping responses (Lazarus & Folkman, 1980). However, an individual is more likely to draw upon problem-focused techniques to constructively resolve stress through such approaches as logical analysis or positive reframing (Moos, 1992). On the other hand, emotion-focused responses are usually employed when it is perceived that nothing can be done to address the problem in question and can potentially involve such indirect activities as avoidance or resignation (Moos, 1992). The results of an experiment conducted by Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, and DeLongis (1986) support these findings pertaining to changes in coping as a function of the perceived outcome of the current stressful event.

Since its inception, this particular theory has been attacked for failing to take into account other potential factors that could be used in the general process of coping. For example, research has suggested that coping may possess more specific components under the general rubrics of problem- and emotion-focused coping. Further, coping mechanisms that are not classified as problem-focused are perceived to be derivations of more emotion-focused strategies (e.g., Aldwin, Folkman, Schaefer, Coyne, & Lazarus, 1980; Aldwin & Revenson, 1987; Coyne, Aldwin, & Lazarus, 1981; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986; Moos, 1992; Parkes, 1984; Scheier, Weintraub, & Carver, 1986).

Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) hypothesized that problem-focused coping strategies can be further subdivided into factors that indicate the action state at the time of the coping response, as well as factors that reflect the specific activities involved in this endeavor. Active coping involves direct activity, movement, or progress towards the reduction of stress. Since this factor calls for overt action, it can be an extension of Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) general concept of problem-focused coping. Further, active coping resembles Moos (1992) concept of approach coping because both require cognitive and/or behavioral efforts to resolve the problem.

The coping component of planning to deal with a stressor involves both the rational appraisal and implementation of definite thought(s) and action(s) that can be used to alleviate tension. Specifically, the process of planning requires the cognitive development of behavioral strategies, as well as consideration of what to do and when to do it. Only after these initial steps have been followed are the selected coping strategies executed (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Moos, 1992).

Seeking out social support is another pastime that Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) have termed a problem-focused coping activity, though it has also been termed an emotion-focused one due to its emphasis on the venting of feelings in a sympathetic and understanding environment (Moos, 1992). Seeking social support for instrumental reasons is the problem-focused motivation for this endeavor; moreover, it involves seeking verbal feedback from significant others in the form of advice, assistance, or information. Since many anxiety-provoking situations invite individuals to elicit both knowledge and emotional support from others, seeking out social support

is an excellent example of a coping mechanism that can be conceptualized as containing both problem- and emotion-focused components.

*Non-Specific Coping and College Students: Empirical Findings.* In attempting to determine the specific coping strategies used by undergraduate college students to deal with an examination, Folkman and Lazarus (1985) found that the participants' appraisals varied as a function of changes within the stressful situation. Furthermore, results from this study suggest that both coping functions can be used in many intense circumstances.

In this same study, Lazarus and Folkman (1985) also found that at least 94% of the students employed both problem- and emotion-focused coping responses during all three stages of this event (i.e., the anticipation stage before the examination, the waiting period before grades were posted after the test, and after the results became known to the participants). Further, the support required by people undergoing stress is dictated by the particular demands of their struggle and by any ensuing changes as their dilemma continues to unfold. Overall, this suggests that utilizing social support is a coping process that changes in relation to time and to shifts in relations with the external environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1985).

The findings of this study underscore the dynamic and changing nature of coping mechanisms. Further, participants were found to be likely to experience contradictory emotions and cognitions in their attempts to resolve anxiety-provoking circumstances. This provides further evidence for both the complex ways in which people cope with the events in their lives, as well as the plethora of options they have available to accomplish this aim (Lazarus & Folkman, 1985).

Subsequent research demonstrated that coping can mitigate both the interpretation and the response to stressful situations. This has been shown to occur in the formulation and implementation of strategies used to deal effectively with these encounters (Arthur, 1998; Lazarus & Folkman, 1988; Santiago-Rivera, Bernstein, & Gard, 1995) as well as in response to the quantity of stress inherent in the situation in question (Dwyer & Cummings, 2001). Specifically, Lazarus and Folkman (1988) found that planful problem solving was related to enhanced affect. This improvement was theorized to be the result of better judgments brought about by more appropriate interactions with the environment.

In a related study, Santiago-Rivera et al. (1995) found that adopting a more challengelike appraisal will potentially bring forth more positive thinking and an increase in goal-directed activity. Further, the results of this research indicated that the extent to which planful problem solving and positive reappraisal are utilized as coping strategies depends on the relationship between cognitive interpretations of stressful events and the importance of achievement to the individual involved.

Arthur (1998) confirmed the findings of Folkman and Lazarus (1988) by showing that negative emotionality has sustained effects on the nature of college students' coping attempts. Specifically, this study found that coping among distressed college students engenders the use of problem-focused coping, more intense emotion-focused coping, as well as avoidant coping strategies that can stymie constructive action.

In examining how the quantity of stress can affect the degree to which coping strategies are utilized, Dwyer and Cummings (2001) established that a direct

relationship exists between the perceived amount of stress and the number of different responses used. Further, this study partially supports the conclusions of Arthur (1998) by ascertaining that a correlation exists between stress and avoidant coping strategies.

Overall, the results from these four empirical studies are supported by previous findings in the literature that link active coping strategies with higher self-confidence, productivity, and positive affect (Holahan & Moos, 1987). Constructive techniques used to address and resolve difficulties have also been shown to be associated with the use of more problem-focused mechanisms (MacNair & Elliott, 1992).

As with the concept of dispositional hope, coping strategies have been shown to be affected by, but distinct from, the psychological constructs of optimism and pessimism. Overall, more optimistic people have been shown to engage in more adaptive, engaged coping behaviors such as active problem-solving and cognitive restructuring. On the other hand, more pessimistic individuals employ more maladaptive coping responses to stress, such as cognitive avoidance and social withdrawal (Long & Sangster, 1993; Scheier & Carver, 1985, 1992).

These results have cultural implications, as noted in a study conducted by Chang (1996), who compared the coping mechanisms used by Asian-American and Caucasian-American college students to deal with stressful life circumstances over a six-week period. The results showed that while no statistical differences exist in positive coping strategies across the two ethnic groups, Asian-American students were found to be more likely to draw upon more pessimistic ways to cope, such as cognitive avoidance and social withdrawal, than were Caucasian-American college students (Chang, 1996).



The way in which an individual copes with a stressful encounter has also been shown to be affected by various intrapersonal characteristics. The traits that have been studied include competitiveness and self-esteem (Franken & Brown, 1996) and the “Big Five” personality factors of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (O’Brien & DeLongis, 1996).

In their examination of the relationship between coping strategies, competitiveness, and self-esteem, Franken and Brown (1996) concluded that individuals with a strong need to win typically have underdeveloped abilities to effectively cope with stress. Instead, these people are more likely to engage in avoidance coping responses (e.g., denial). This study also demonstrated that self-esteem is directly related to the capacity to adaptively cope with tense situations.

In looking at the association between the “Big Five” personality factors and coping, O’Brien and DeLongis (1996) provided support for the supposition that coping responses are jointly determined by disposition and environment (Lazarus, 1990). Further, the specific personality tendencies of neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were found to account for a significant portion of the variance for both approach (i.e., positive reappraisal) and avoidance (i.e., acceptance and cognitive) coping responses. Conversely, logical analysis and seeking guidance and support (both approach coping responses) were not shown to account for a significant portion of variance. Overall, these results suggest that both approach and avoidance coping responses are necessary in any examination of coping.

## *Career Indecision*

*Career Indecision: Basic Concepts.* For the past 75 years, the problem of career indecision has been a major concern for both researchers and counselors (Jurgens, 2000). The construct of career indecision refers to the difficulties people face in deciding on a career (Slaney, 1988). Because career indecision is a common problem for clients who present for career counseling, this construct has become one of the most widely researched within the field of vocational psychology (Betz, 1992; Fouad, 1994; Meier, 1991; Tinsley, 1992). This heightened focus is particularly evident in light of the mounting evidence that career indecision is a complicated and multidimensional construct, as opposed to the linear and dichotomous construct initially conceived by early researchers in this field (Newman, Fuqua, & Seaworth, 1989).

As a result of this increased inquiry, attempts have been made to address the issue of career indecision by delineating more theory-driven vocational concepts. Specifically, the psychodynamic approach to career counseling (Bordin & Kopplin, 1973) emphasizes the importance of internal sources of resistance to decision-making. On the other hand, the developmental approach (e.g., Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996; Super, 1953) likens the difficulties encountered in selecting a career to the regular stages of career development.

The vocational interests approach (e.g., Holland, 1985; Roe, 1956; Salomone, 1982) resembles the developmental approach because it isolates one common stage of the career decision-making process for a more comprehensive examination. This theory posits that an inadequate solidification of interests, a common stage of the career

decision making process, often prevents a hesitant individual from making a final vocational choice (Holland, 1985).

Three approaches to conceptualizing career indecision relevant to the empirical research conducted within the preceding 20 years include the career decidedness status model (Jones & Chenery, 1980), career decision-making self-efficacy (Taylor & Betz, 1983), and the social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). These three conceptualizations are important because of their emphasis on cognitive-person variables, a focus which is mirrored in Snyder's Hope Theory (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991). Because of their significance to the present study, these models of career indecision will be briefly presented here.

The oldest and most widely researched of these models is the career decidedness status model of Jones and Chenery (1980). Within this framework, career decidedness is defined as a continuous variable ranging from a resolution of complete commitment to an occupational choice to total indecision. Further, in attempting to determine how committed people are to an occupational decision, a three-dimensional construct was developed to measure career decidedness that consists of the decidedness, comfort, and reasons dimensions. The decidedness component quantifies the level of commitment, the comfort component refers to the level of dissatisfaction brought about by the lack of a career choice, and the reasons component of this model attempts to provide an explanation as to why an occupational decision has not been made (Jones & Chenery, 1980).

In investigating the reasons segment of this conceptualization more closely, Jones and Chenery (1980) identified four potential justifications for irresolution. These

four rationales are a lack of clarity within the self, a dearth of information pertaining to occupational and/or educational options, general hesitancy, and career choice prominence. Empirical support for this model has subsequently been provided by Jones (1989) and Fuqua and Newman (1989), who verified the association between the comfort and decidedness factors of this framework (Meldahl & Muchinsky, 1997).

Career decision-making self-efficacy has been described as an integral concept to consider when attempting to meet the vocational development needs of both high school and undergraduate college students (Kraus & Hughey, 1999). This construct was defined by Taylor and Betz (1983) as “expectations of self-efficacy with respect to the specific tasks and behaviors required in making career decisions” (pp. 64-65). Based on this conceptualization, career decision-making self-efficacy can be conceived as a problem-specific version of the pathways component of Snyder’s Dispositional Hope theory (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991).

Subsequent research on this initial conceptualization has revealed a negative relationship between career decision-making self-efficacy and career indecision (Bergeron & Romano, 1994; Gillespie & Hillman, 1993; Mathieu, Sowa, & Niles, 1993; Robbins, 1985; Taylor & Betz, 1983; Taylor & Popma, 1990). On the other hand, mixed results as to the influences of career decision-making self-efficacy on the gender of the participants have also been produced, with this variable showing both an effect on this capability (Kraus & Hughey, 1999) and a lack of relationship to this construct (Bergeron & Romano, 1994; Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996; Taylor & Betz, 1983).

More recently, social cognitive career theory has been developed in order to more effectively explain the procedures by which individuals formulate educational and/or vocational interests, arrive at relevant career options, and account for the degree of success that comes from the accomplishment of these objectives (Lent et al., 1994). This theory focuses on personality constructs that allow for independent decision-making as well as the interrelationships between these intrapersonal characteristics and other aspects of the person, their behavior, and their environment (Lent et al., 2002).

In an attempt to provide empirical validation for the social cognitive career theory, Lent et al. (2002) found that a variety of means could be used to cope with impediments to career decision-making. While these authors found that direct problem-focused coping and social support seeking were the mechanisms most commonly utilized, cognitive restructuring and reframing were also called upon as ways to resolve this difficulty (Lent et al., 2002).

*The Relationship between Career Indecision and Other Psychological Constructs: Empirical Findings.* Three personality factors thought to influence career indecision are self-efficacy, locus of control, and anxiety (Gaffner & Hazler, 2002). Specifically, both lower self-efficacy (Betz & Vuyten, 1997; Taylor & Betz, 1983) and an external locus of control (Fuqua & Hartman, 1983; Lucas & Epperson, 1990) have been shown to defer the process of career decision-making.

Anxiety has also been demonstrated to have a significant effect on career indecision. This is because a high proportion of undergraduate college students have been found to be trepidatious about deciding on a college major (Hawkins, Bradley, & White, 1977). Further, many college students also lack a clear sense of personal

identity (Holland & Holland, 1977). Given these initial suppositions, it should come as no surprise that ensuing research has consistently linked the predisposition towards trait anxiety to the concept of career indecision (Fuqua, Newman, & Seaworth, 1988; Fuqua, Seaworth, & Newman, 1987; Hawkins, Bradley, & White, 1977; Kimes & Troth, 1974; Lucas, 1993; Newman, Fuqua, & Seaworth, 1989; Peng, 2001).

Specifically, Kimes and Troth (1974) found that an inverse relationship exists between trait anxiety and students' satisfaction with their career decision, with anxiety having a more detrimental impact on career indecision than on the levels of career indecisiveness. In other words, as the students' self-ratings of their level of career indecision moved in the direction of undecided or no decision, their degree of trait anxiety increased, a result used in a subsequent study to substantiate the finding that anxiety can predict general educational-vocational decidedness (Hawkins, Bradley, & White, 1977).

Potentially magnifying this anxiety are findings that suggest that undecided students tend to drop out, earn fewer college credits, and obtain lower grades (Elton & Rose, 1971; Lunneborg, 1975; cited in Holland & Holland, 1977) as well as display difficulties with decision-making in general (Gaffner & Hazler, 2002; Larson & Heppner, 1985; Lucas & Epperson, 1990; Savickas & Jarjoura, 1991). All of these results correspond with conclusions that have linked a higher level of dispositional hope with higher academic achievement and a greater readiness to engage in general problem-solving (Snyder et al., 1991), thereby suggesting that career indecision and dispositional hope are negatively related.

A factor analysis conducted by Fuqua, Newman, and Seaworth (1988) further confirmed earlier reports by demonstrating that the primary factor of the Career Decision Scale (CDS; Osipow, Carney, Winer, Yanico, & Koschier, 1976) indicates that anxiety is a significant element within the overarching model of career indecision. Since this component is composed of items that address the lack of information about the self and viable career options, this lack of knowledge can make this process more ambiguous and consequently more fearsome to the typical undecided college student.

The factor analysis conducted by Fuqua et al. (1988) revealed that a concern regarding the goodness-of-fit with a particular career and the presence of discernable impediments to a previous choice would also tend to produce marked levels of anxiety. Moreover, anxiety about potential occupational choices has been linked to certain career-specific, self-defeating personality characteristics such as a poorer vocational identity and a nebulous conceptualization of long-term objectives, interests, and aptitudes (Sweeney & Schill, 1998). In discerning the most effective way to combat negative reactions to career decisions, an ensuing study has demonstrated the effectiveness of group counseling in alleviating the problem of transitory occupational anxiety (Peng, 2001).

Previous research has also found that career indecision is related to both the overall predisposition towards indecisiveness (Cooper, Fuqua, & Hartman, 1984), general neurosis (Meldahl & Muchinsky, 1997), and the “big five” personality characteristics (Lounsbury, Tatum, Chambers, Owens, & Gibson, 1999). Specifically, Cooper et al. (1984) found that individuals who endorse both a high degree of

vocational uncertainty and general irresolution are also likely to manifest more submissiveness, passivity, self-criticism, and cooperativeness.

Over the past decade, two studies of note have attempted to link career indecision to one or more of the “big five” personality traits of neuroticism, extroversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Lounsbury et al., 1999; Meldahl and Muchinsky 1997). Both of these research teams found that career indecision contains a neurotic element, which supports previous empirical research in this area (Chartrand, Rose, Elliott, Marmarosh, & Caldwell, 1993; Meyer & Winer, 1993).

In addition to the finding relating vocational uncertainty to neuroticism, Lounsbury et al. (1999) also found significant positive relationships between a relatively solid career choice and the characteristics of agreeableness and conscientiousness. Given the direct coalition between career decidedness and more adaptive psychological and interpersonal tendencies, it can be safely concluded that a relatively firm career decision is directly related to a higher degree of general life satisfaction (Lounsbury et al., 1999).

#### *Literature Review Summary*

The purpose of this literature review has been to present the relevant conceptual and empirical findings on the psychological constructs of dispositional hope, non-specific coping, and career indecision. In reviewing the conceptual and empirical research pertaining to dispositional hope that predate Snyder’s Dispositional Hope theory, it becomes evident that it was not until the mid-1970’s that the idea that hope affects human endeavors received any substantial validation.



The Hope Scale was the first to associate hope with other potential motivations (e.g., hostility, anxiety). However, it was the Hopelessness Scale, as well as the instrument written to measure dispositional optimism, that were the first to yield empirically defensible information about hope's relations with other psychological constructs. Unfortunately, these early measures and the ensuing research assumed that the cognitive and behavioral manifestations of hope were the same. Therefore, attention was not given to any potential interactions between these two action states, or to how these relationships could influence subsequent functioning.

It was partially an attempt to answer these questions that contributed to the evolution of both Snyder's conceptualization of dispositional hope and the Trait Hope Scale. This conception of hope represented a departure from previous notions of hope in that hope was posited to consist of two necessary but separate components. These two components are agency, or the belief that goals can be achieved, and pathways, or the ability to produce feasible plans to meet objectives.

Subsequent research demonstrated that hope is typically dispositional in nature and that the selection, implementation, and attainment of goals of high- versus low-hope individuals can be predicted. Dispositional hope was also shown to be similar to, albeit distinct from, the individual difference variables of dispositional optimism and self-efficacy.

Overall, dispositional hope was shown to affect many aspects of psychological functioning. Regarding specific differences in behavior, dispositional hope was also shown to be positively associated with acceptance of a traumatic physical injury or a terminal illness, a decrease in substance use in adolescents, and the maintenance of drug

and alcohol sobriety in homeless veterans. The construct of burnout was shown to be negatively related to dispositional hope, as were the emotions of dysphoria, depression, and anxiety. Finally, in examining the ramifications of differences in dispositional hope in the college student population, researchers found that this trait could predict academic and sport achievement, and was negatively related to statistical anxiety.

The construct of non-specific coping has been historically defined as a dynamic means to address pessimistic emotions in such a way that the interpretation of a stressful event is altered. In general, two nebulous types of coping were hypothesized to exist. Problem-focused coping seeks to decrease external tension while the aim of emotion-focused coping strategies are to temper the effects of debilitating emotions such as sadness, anxiety, or anger. In considering to what degree these two types of coping could be applied to a specific problematic situation, research has demonstrated that the coping strategy used is directly related to the perceived result.

Career indecision has come under greater focus during the last two decades because of an increased awareness of its complexity and multidimensionality. As a result of this scrutiny, this area of applied psychology has become increasingly theoretical with models designed to explain the process of vocational decision-making from many different perspectives. Of all the theories that have been proposed to account for career indecision, perhaps the most significant of these paradigms are the career decidedness status model, career decision-making self-efficacy, and the social cognitive career theory. The increased importance of such theories is because of the emphasis each places on the significance of cognitive factors within the individual.

While no study to date has examined the relationship between career indecision and dispositional hope, research has found connections between career indecision and anxiety, self-efficacy, locus of control, general indecisiveness and neurosis, and several of the “big five” personality characteristics. Specifically, self-efficacy, locus of control, and trait anxiety have been found to significantly impact career indecision.

Empirical findings in the area of career indecision have also suggested that an external locus of control, lower self-efficacy, an impaired ability to make decisions, or a neurotic, submissive, or cooperative temperament can affect the occupational decision-making process. In short, results strongly indicate that career indecision is greatly affected by the overall style of decision-making, as well as by personality characteristics inherent in the individual.

### The Present Study

#### *Problem Statement*

The problem addressed by this study was a description of the relationships among the various components of dispositional hope, career indecision, and the coping responses that could be used to choose a vocation.

#### *Statement of Purpose*

The purpose of the present study was to provide further evidence of the distinct ways by which dispositional hope affects career indecision and coping with vocational choice among undergraduate students. In order to accomplish this objective, the present study described the relationships between:

1. Dispositional hope and its specific components of agency and pathways as measured by the Trait Hope Scale (THS; Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991),

academic achievement as measured by high school and undergraduate grade point average (GPA), and career indecision as measured by the Indecision scale of the Career Decision Scale (Osipow, 1980); and

2. Dispositional hope's specific components of agency and pathways as measured by the Trait Hope Scale (THS; Snyder, 1989; Snyder, et al., 1991), and general coping tendencies and the specific elements of approach/avoidance coping responses as measured by the Coping Responses Inventory (Moos, 1992) when the problem requiring attention is career indecision.

### *Significance of the Study*

Snyder et al. (1991) proposed that hope exemplifies the degree to which an individual is willing to engage in activities to achieve a certain goal. Problem solving is usually an integral component of goal-driven efforts (Chang, 1998; Snyder et al., 1991); thus, it can be asserted that the concept of hope is directly related to problem-solving ability. This position was based on the capacity of hope, as measured by the Trait Hope Scale (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991) to account for variance in non-specific problem-focused coping endeavors even after controlling for other significant individual-difference variables, such as affect and dispositional optimism.

In attempting to determine the relationship between hope and more specific aspects of problem-solving ability, Chang (1998) examined the effects of hope, coping, and problem-solving ability on academic and interpersonal functioning in a college student population. Results from this study were mixed and indicated that while a discrepancy exists between high- and low-hope students in their approach and

resolution of stressful academic situations, these two groups are not significantly different in their style of confronting potentially tense interpersonal difficulties.

Given that the process of selecting a vocation involves an appraisal of both academic and interpersonal strengths and weaknesses, the findings from Chang (1998) precluded any reasonable inferences about the relationship between dispositional hope and possible reasons for hesitancy in making an occupational choice. Furthermore, research from Anderson (1988) and Harney (1989) has established a relationship between academic achievement and dispositional hope among undergraduates (Snyder et al., 1991). Given these findings, any correlational research that uses dispositional hope as a predictor variable should also gauge the variance accounted for by academic achievement, since a failure to do so could potentially confound any subsequent results.

Findings from the career indecision literature further cloud this issue as both cognitive and interpersonal coping mechanisms (Betz & Vuyten, 1997; Fuqua & Hartman, 1983; Lucas & Epperson, 1990; Taylor & Betz, 1983) and problem-solving abilities (Larson & Heppner, 1985) have been shown to affect career indecision. Given all of these discrepancies, additional research was needed to further clarify the relationship between dispositional hope, career indecision, and the types of coping mechanisms that could be used to choose a vocation.

#### *Research Question*

What are the relationships between dispositional hope, career indecision, and the coping responses used to address career indecision?

#### *Research Hypotheses*

The hypotheses for this study were:

1. Individuals high in dispositional hope and academic achievement (the predictor variables) are more likely to have made a decision about a career (i.e., dispositional hope and academic achievement have a significant positive effect on career indecision).
2. Individuals high in dispositional hope and academic achievement (the predictor variables) are more likely to have used approach coping responses to resolve their career indecision (i.e., dispositional hope has a significant positive effect on the use of approach coping responses to career indecision).
3. Individuals high in dispositional hope and academic achievement (the predictor variables) are less likely to have used avoidance coping responses to resolve their career indecision (i.e., dispositional hope has a significant negative effect on the use of avoidance coping responses to career indecision).

#### *Definitions of Terms*

Conceptual and operational terms defined for this study will be:

1. *Dispositional Hope* – the perception that something desired may happen through the implementation of goals (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991). In this study, dispositional hope was measured as the overall score derived from the Trait Hope Scale (THS; Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991). Specific components of Dispositional Hope are:

- a. *Agency* – the perception that goals can be successfully met by the individual.

In this study, agency was measured by the Agency subscale of the Trait Hope Scale (THS; Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991).

- b. *Pathways* – the belief that successful plans to meet goals can be generated by the individual. In this study, pathways was measured by the Pathways subscale of the Trait Hope Scale (THS; Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991).
- 2. *Academic Achievement* – performance in high school and college coursework as measured by self-reported total grade point average (GPA). For this study, GPA ranged from 0.00 to 4.00 and was computed by assigning values to letter grades received in each course (i.e., A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, and F = 0).
- 3. *Career Decision-Making* – a continuum of self-perceptions ranging from completely decided to completely undecided (*Career Indecision*; Jones & Chenery, 1980). For this study, career indecision was measured by the Indecision scale of the Career Decision Scale (Osipow, 1980).
- 4. *Coping Responses* – the method (i.e., cognitive or behavioral) or focus (i.e., problem-focused or emotion-focused) by which difficulties are addressed and resolved (Moos, 1992). As measured by the Coping Responses Inventory (Moos, 1992) particular ways to cope were conceptualized as:
  - a. *Approach Coping Responses* – problem-focused solutions to difficulties. As measured by the Coping Responses Inventory (Moos, 1992), approach coping responses were defined as:
    - 1. *Logical Analysis* – cognitive attempts to understand and prepare mentally for a stressor and its consequences.
    - 2. *Positive Reappraisal* – cognitive attempts to construe and restructure a problem in a positive way while still accepting the reality of the situation.

3. *Seeking Guidance and Support* – behavioral attempts to seek information, guidance, and support.
  4. *Problem Solving* – behavioral attempts to take action to deal directly with the problem.
- b. *Avoidance Coping Responses* – emotion-focused solutions to difficulties. As measured by the Coping Responses Inventory (Moos, 1992), avoidance coping responses were defined as:
1. *Cognitive Avoidance* – cognitive attempts to avoid thinking realistically about a problem.
  2. *Acceptance or Resignation* – cognitive attempts to react to the problem by accepting it.
  3. *Seeking Alternative Rewards* – behavioral attempts to get involved in substitute activities and create new sources of satisfaction.
  4. *Emotional Discharge* – behavioral attempts to reduce tension by expressing negative feelings (e.g., anger or depression).

#### *Overview of the Present Study*

Empirical studies have demonstrated that certain cognitive coping responses are related to dispositional hope but that more interpersonal ones are not. On the other hand, both cognitive and interpersonal coping responses appear to influence the process of selecting a vocational option. Because of this existing discrepancy, the association between dispositional hope, career indecision, and the responses used to cope with the problem of vocational choice could not be inferred with any conviction. Furthermore, a relationship has been demonstrated between dispositional hope and academic



achievement among undergraduate students. Given this, research that explores potential connections between dispositional hope and other variables needs to take this established link into account. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to address this inconsistency by describing the relationships between dispositional hope, academic achievement, career indecision, and the coping responses used to deal with career indecision in a sample of undergraduate students.

## CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

The present study was descriptive and correlational in nature. According to Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996), correlational experimental methods are used to describe associations between variables and to predict participants' scores on one variable from their scores on other variables. This type of empirical approach was appropriate for this study as the objective was to depict the relationships between the components of dispositional hope, career indecision, and the coping responses used to make a vocational choice.

### *Sample*

The sample for this study consisted of 320 undergraduate students attending a public university in a southwestern state. A convenience sample of students enrolled in Introductory Psychology was utilized. A power analysis indicated that a minimum of 200 participants was needed for a medium effect size of .8. Each participant was at least 18 years of age and proficient in reading and writing English. Participants received course credit for taking part in this study.

### *Protection of Human Participants*

Several procedures were used to ensure that participants' rights were protected. This study was submitted to the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review and approval. Following approval by the IRB, the researcher contacted the faculty member responsible for recruiting research participants from Introductory Psychology at the public university in question in order to obtain permission to distribute assessment instruments to undergraduate students enrolled in these classes.

Prior to the distribution of the research instruments, the researcher gave participants a brief description of the study as well as any associated risks and benefits of participating in this study (see Appendix A). All responses were anonymous and coded so that scores on each instrument could be associated for purposes of data analysis. Confidentiality was assured both verbally by the researcher at the beginning of the study and in the informed consent. Each participant was required to read and sign an informed consent form (see Appendix B) and was given a copy of this form to keep (see Appendix C).

Once informed consent had been obtained from all individuals willing to participate in this study, each participant was given the research packet to complete. Data collection occurred in the presence of the researcher in order to provide participants with the opportunity to have their questions and concerns promptly addressed. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

### *Instruments*

Basic demographic information was obtained from a questionnaire developed by the researcher (see Appendix D). In addition, three instruments were used in this study: the Career Decision Scale (CDS; Osipow, 1980; see Appendix E for a copy of this measure), the Coping Responses Inventory (CRI; Moos, 1992; see Appendix F for a copy of this measure), and the Trait Hope Scale (THS; Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991; see Appendix G for a copy of this measure and Appendix H for the author's permission to use it in this study). Pertinent information related to the format of the

instruments and their respective psychometric properties will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

### *The Career Decision Scale*

The Career Decision Scale (CDS) is a 19-item scale designed to measure an individual's current position in the process of deciding on a career (see Appendix E). Respondents rate their choice to each item on a four-point Likert scale with options ranging from 1 (not at all like me) to 4 (exactly like me). Based on the totals for both the Certainty and Indecision scales, decisions can be made regarding the necessity of additional assessments or interventions to address vocational doubt. The CDS yields a numerical estimate of the construct of career indecision as well as potential explanations of its etiology.

*Reliability.* Osipow (1980) reports that two studies were conducted to assess the test-retest reliability of both individual items and Indecision scale scores. First, Osipow, Carney, and Barak (1976) found two retest correlations of .90 and .82 for the Indecision scale for two separate samples of college students. Individual item correlations for both the Certainty and Indecision scales ranged from .34 to .82 with the majority of correlations falling in the .60 to .80 range. In a subsequent study, Slaney, Palko-Nonemaker, and Alexander (1981) measured test-retest correlations over a six-week period for the Certainty and Indecision scale items. This examination produced coefficients ranging from .19 to .70, with the total CDS scores yielding a correlation of .70.

*Construct Validity.* To ascertain construct validity of the CDS, Osipow and Schweikert (1981) correlated CDS scores with scores from other vocational inventories.

Specifically, when the CDS was compared with the Assessment of Career Decision Making (ACDM; Buck & Daniels, 1985), a negative correlation was found between the Indecision scale and the ACDM's planfulness scale. The CDS was also found to be significantly related to the Attitude scale of the Career Maturity Inventory (CMI; Crites, 1973) as well as to actually distinguish decided from undecided students (Limburg, 1980).

*Criterion Validity.* Several noteworthy studies have tested the criterion validity of the CDS, though virtually all of these have produced inconsistent findings of the effects of age and gender on CDS scores. Both Niece & Bradley (1979) and Osipow (1978) found that significant differences exist as a function of age while Hartman (1980) and Limburg (1980) did not. Further, studies have found less career indecision in both males (Gordon & Osipow, 1976; Westbrook, Cutts, Madison, & Arcia, 1980) or females (Taylor, 1979), while still other research has found no difference based on gender (Cellini, 1978; Limburg, 1980; Niece & Bradley, 1979; Osipow, Carney, & Barak, 1976; Sutera, 1977).

In summary, research has provided evidence for the reliability and validity of the CDS. The CDS measures both the certainty of an individual's current career choice as well as their present level of indecision. Based on their score, the respondent can be placed in one of three classifications: low (little need for further assessments or intervention), medium (further need for assessments), or high (possible invalid test data or a high likelihood for intervention). Other advantages of the CDS include its relatively short length and ease of scoring.

### *The Coping Responses Inventory*

The Coping Responses Inventory (CRI) is a 48-item measure constructed to assess the presence of eight different coping responses to stressful life circumstances (Moos, 1992). In essence, this instrument was designed to calculate both the focus of coping (problem- versus emotion-focused) and the method of coping (either cognitive or behavioral). For the purposes of the CRI, the terminology used to describe the focus of coping has been altered to approach coping versus avoidance coping since problem-focused coping calls for a direct advance towards the difficulty in question while emotion-focused coping strategies typically indicate a refusal to actively resolve the problem (Moos, 1992).

The responses to the CRI are measured by eight scales: (1) Logical Analysis, (2) Positive Reappraisal, (3) Seeking Guidance and Support, (4) Problem Solving, (5) Cognitive Avoidance, (6) Acceptance or Resignation, (7) Seeking Alternative Rewards, and (8) Emotional Discharge. Scales one through four measure approach coping tendencies while scales five through eight measure those of avoidance coping. Further, scales one, two, five, and six measure cognitive coping responses while scales three, four, seven, and eight measure behavioral coping mechanisms (Moos, 1992).

The CRI has been constructed in such a way that the respondent selects a recent stressor (in the case of this study, career indecision) and uses a 4-point Likert scale with values ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very often) to rate their reliance on each of the 48 test items. In addition, 10 items assess how the recent stressor has been appraised as well as how this particular stressor will be addressed.

*Reliability and Validity.* Sufficient internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) has been established for the CRI through comparisons of the scores of both men and women on the eight factors with coefficients ranging from .61 to .74 for men and .58 to .71 for women (Moos, 1992). Though the internal consistencies are moderate for both men and women, Moos (1992) explained that this was due to a conscious effort to reduce redundancy and to the probable use of only one or two coping responses within each category. Further analyses revealed that the CRI correlates only modestly with social desirability (mean  $r = .13$ ) for the eight scales. Overall, Moos (1992) concluded that the CRI possesses acceptable psychometric properties.

Subsequent validity studies have provided evidence for the construct, concurrent, and predictive validities of the CRI (Moos, 1992). An abundance of research has examined the differences in coping responses as a function of alcoholism, depression, and major physical illness. Advantages of this measure include its demonstrated ability to satisfactorily measure many of the significant coping responses to external stress as well as its ease in administration and scoring.

#### *Trait Hope Scale*

The Trait Hope Scale (THS) is a 12-item scale (eight hope items, four fillers) constructed to assess the two components of an individual's level of dispositional hope. Consistent with Snyder's theory of dispositional hope (Snyder, 1989) the THS was designed to measure both the agency (perceived success in achieving goals) and pathways (perceived ability to derive the means to accomplish goals; Snyder et al., 1991).

*Reliability and Validity.* Internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) was measured for the THS as well as for the agency and pathways subscales (Snyder et al., 1991). Results from this procedure indicated alpha coefficients in the acceptable range for the total scale (.74 to .84), the agency subscale (.71 to .76), and the pathways subscale (.63 to .80). Test-retest reliabilities using undergraduate students indicated acceptable correlations at the three-week (.85), eight-week (.73), and 10-week (.76 and .82 in two separate studies) intervals.

Validity was supported for the THS in studies that incorporated measures hypothesized to associate moderately with dispositional hope (Gibb, 1990; Holleran & Snyder, 1990). Results from these studies showed that dispositional hope correlates moderately with measures of dispositional optimism (Life Orientation Test; Scheier & Carver, 1985), goal attainment expectancy (Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale; Fibel & Hale, 1978), personal control (Burger-Cooper Life Experiences Survey; Burger & Cooper, 1979), problem-solving ability (Problem Solving Inventory; Heppner & Petersen, 1982), and self-esteem (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; Rosenberg, 1965). Further, the THS was also found to correlate negatively with measures of hopelessness (Beck et al., 1974) and depression (Beck, Ward, Mendelsohn, Mock, & Erbaugh, 1961).

Overall, empirical research has provided evidence for the reliability and validity of the THS. Advantages to using this instrument include brevity and ease of administration and scoring.

#### *Data Collection*

Data for this study was collected in the Fall semester of 2003. Permission to distribute the demographic questionnaire and assessment instruments to students



enrolled in Introductory Psychology was obtained from the faculty member responsible for coordinating the use of the Introductory Psychology Participant Pool. The researcher scheduled times to gather data from these sources.

Prospective participants were given a brief oral description of the study that included any associated risks and benefits for participation in this study. Participants were required to read and sign an informed consent form prior to data collection. These forms were collected and kept separate from the demographic questionnaires and assessment instruments so that no participant was directly identified. Research materials were then distributed to each participant. The researcher answered any questions participants had, either before or during data collection.

Upon completion of the research packet, each participant gave their responses to the researcher and was then free to leave the testing area. Upon written request, the researcher was prepared to forward a report of the completed study to any participant who asked for the general results of this research, though none did so.

#### *Treatment of Data*

Assessment instruments were computer scored. Factor and total scores of each instrument were calculated. Demographic data for participants was analyzed using measures of central tendency. Relationships among relevant variables were initially analyzed using correlations. Linear regression was then used to explore empirical support for the research hypotheses with dispositional hope and academic achievement as the predictor variables.

Due to the number of correlations conducted in this study, a Bonferroni adjustment was initially conducted. According to the results of this test, using a

significance level of  $p = .05$  across all of the correlations used in this research would have increased the possibility of a Type I error to 80%. In order to maintain the likelihood of a Type I error to 5%, a significance level of .003 was adhered to in all correlational procedures. Further, for those correlations in this study below .2, caution should be used in interpreting these findings.

## CHAPTER III: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Demographic Information*

Three hundred twenty undergraduate students enrolled in Introductory Psychology at a large southwestern university participated in this study. However, one student's responses could not be included due to an unacceptable number of missing items.

An analysis of the demographic information indicates that 58.4% of the total number of participants was female and 94% of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 21. As this is the first semester in college for many participants, only a self-reported estimate of their college grade point average (GPA) could be provided. From this point forward, this particular variable will be referred to as "estimated college GPA."

Interestingly, 80.4% of the respondents reported that their estimated college GPA probably will be 3.0 or better. This finding is perhaps linked to the assertions of 89.9% of the participants who reported that their actual high school GPA was 3.0 or better. Overall, these findings are further supported by the strong correlation detected between the estimated college and achieved high school GPAs of the participants of this study ( $r = .42, p < .000$ ). Unfortunately, given the categorical nature of the questions requesting the age as well as the estimated college and actual high school GPAs of each participant, it was not possible to conduct any further analyses of these variables using measures of central tendency.

Regarding ethnic background, 76.3% of those who completed the research measures were Caucasian, 5.3% were African/African-American, 7.5% were

Asian/Asian-American, 2.5% were Latino, 5% were Native American, and 3.1% indicated that their ethnicity did not fall into any of the above categories. Not surprisingly, given the sequence in which most undergraduate students take Introductory Psychology, 66.6% reported their college classification as “freshman,” with only one participant (0.3%) claiming enrollment as an “unclassified student.”

#### *Variable Relationships and Internal Consistency*

Correlations were run among the primary variables used in the present study; moreover, these results had significant implications for the way in which these variables were conceptualized and the means by which they were statistically processed. These results revealed that the relationships between dispositional hope and its components of agency and pathways were extremely strong, with coefficients of .86 and .85 ( $p < .000$ ), respectively.

In either case, over 73% of the variance in one variable is accounted for by the other. In addition, the correlation between agency and pathways was .46, with 21% of the variance in one variable accounted for by the other. Because the association among these variables is so high, it was decided at the outset that the overarching construct of dispositional hope cannot be further divided into its components of agency and pathways. For the purposes of this study, no attempt will be made to divide the overarching construct of dispositional hope.

Cronbach’s test of internal consistency was performed in order to determine how well each of the individual test items measured a single uni-dimensional construct. Results yielded low to moderate alpha levels for all scales used in this research. Specifically, coefficients ranged from .63 and .64 for the agency and pathways

subscales of the Trait Hope Scale (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991), from .56 to .62 for the approach coping subscales of the Coping Responses Inventory (Moos, 1993), and from .55 to .72 for the avoidance coping subscales of the Coping Responses Inventory (Moos, 1993). Further, the alpha levels for the certainty and indecision subscales of the Career Decision Scale (Osipow et al., 1976) were .79 and .88, respectively.

### *Hypothesis 1*

The first hypothesis of the present study stated that participants high in dispositional hope and academic achievement would be more likely to have made a decision about a career. In other words, the independent variables of dispositional hope and academic achievement (operationally defined as two separate variables: estimated college and actual high school GPA) were thought to have significant effects on the dependent variables of career certainty and career indecision. In order to gauge the feasibility of these assumptions, correlations were run in order to determine if linear regression analyses could be conducted. These initial findings are presented in Table 1.

Results from these analyses suggest that career certainty can be conceptualized as more than a lack of career indecision. Specifically, while a statistically and clinically significant positive relationship was found to exist between the overall dispositional hope score and career certainty ( $r = .27, p < .000$ ), this association was stronger than the negative link shown to exist between dispositional hope and career indecision ( $r = -.15, p < .003$ ).

An examination of the relationship between academic achievement and career certainty showed a significant positive relationship between the two variables of

estimated college GPA and career certainty ( $r = .17, p < .003$ ), as well as a negative association between estimated college GPA and career indecision ( $r = -.15, p < .003$ ). However, while virtually no relationship at all between career certainty and actual high school GPA ( $r = .09, p < .12$ ) was found to exist, analyses did uncover a significant negative relationship between high school GPA and career indecision ( $r = -.14, p < .05$ ). Overall, the first hypothesis of this study received moderate preliminary support; therefore, two regression analyses were used in an attempt to gauge the feasibility of this research hypothesis.

The first regression analysis used dispositional hope and estimated college GPA as the predictor variables, while career certainty was the dependent variable. In order to detect the percentage of the total variance that can be attributed to each of the independent variables, total hope and estimated college GPA were entered into the analysis separately. Results from these procedures indicated that both estimated college GPA and dispositional hope can be used to predict career certainty, with total hope accounting for 3% of the total variance in career certainty, and estimated college GPA accounting for 9% of the variance in this variable. Other findings from this regression analysis are presented in Table 2.

Given the relatively weaker correlations between total hope (and its component agency) and academic achievement (as measured by estimated college and actual high school GPA) with career indecision, it was suspected that these variables account for a smaller proportion of the variance in this dependent variable. Regression analyses bore this supposition out. In particular, estimated college and actual high school GPA were

both shown to account for 4% of the variance in career indecision and total hope by 2%. Additional findings from these regression analyses are presented in Table 3.

### *Hypothesis 2*

The second hypothesis of this study stated that individuals high in dispositional hope and academic achievement would be more likely to have used approach coping responses to resolve their career indecision. Preliminary results found that the use of approach coping mechanisms to assist in the career decision-making process is strongly correlated with total hope, moderately associated with estimated college GPA and career certainty, and mildly linked with actual high school GPA. The specific correlations between approach coping mechanisms and the variables listed here are shown in Table 4.

Since the correlations between actual high school GPA and the use of approach coping mechanisms in resolving career indecision were only mildly significant, regression analyses were only performed comparing total hope with estimated college GPA. These results found that total hope accounts for 14% of the variance when compared with estimated college GPA (which accounted for 2.6% of the total variance in this variable). Additional results from these statistical analyses are presented in Table 5.

### *Hypothesis 3*

Finally, the third hypothesis posited that participants high in dispositional hope and academic achievement would have been less likely to have used avoidance coping responses to resolve their career indecision. Generally speaking, findings did not support this hypothesis. Specifically, results for this hypothesis found that while total

hope is not significantly correlated in either direction with the use of avoidance coping strategies, a significant, moderate correlation was noted between avoidance coping strategies and career indecision. Furthermore, both estimated college GPA and career certainty were found to be mildly negatively correlated with avoidance coping mechanisms.

Interestingly, a moderate, statistically significant correlation was detected between the use of avoidance coping strategies and career indecision. However, given the weak or nonexistent correlations among the variables needed to test this hypothesis, it was not possible to conduct any further analysis using linear regression. Results from these correlational procedures are shown in Table 4.



## CHAPTER IV: GENERAL DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to examine how dispositional hope can affect both career indecision and coping with vocational choice among a sample of undergraduate students. In order to satisfy this objective, the relationships between these variables were studied prior to conducting linear regression analyses. All subsequent regression analyses were run with dispositional hope and academic achievement (operationally defined in this research as actual high school and estimated college GPA) as the independent variables.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that dispositional hope and estimated post high school academic achievement can predict an individual's degree of career certainty and career indecision. Further, this research also supports the contention that participants with higher levels of dispositional hope are more likely to have used approach coping responses to choose a career. On the other hand, the research hypothesis of the present study that attempted to link (in a negative direction) dispositional hope and academic achievement with the use of avoidance coping strategies received little empirical support. Specific findings of the present study will be discussed in detail in subsequent sections.

### *Hypothesis 1*

Findings from the present study suggest that an undergraduate student's degree of dispositional hope can play an important role in determining his or her level of career certainty as well as in approximating the degree of career decidedness. Preliminary statistical analyses revealed moderate correlations between career certainty and the total degree of dispositional hope. Further, a low correlation was found between career

certainty and estimated college GPA. Regarding career indecision, statistically significant correlations between career indecision and total hope (low), estimated college GPA (low), and actual high school GPA (moderate) were also obtained.

Subsequent findings from the linear regression analyses indicated that dispositional hope and estimated college GPA can be used to predict an individual college student's career certainty, with hope accounting for a significant proportion of the variance in this variable. This result suggests that decided students may feel increased optimism about the future since they have developed a definite plan for pursuing a vocation, are reasonably certain about its eventual success, and have constructed one or more contingency plans in the event that their initial efforts fail.

On the other hand, dispositional hope and estimated college GPA account for a much lower portion of the variance in career indecision. Further, unlike career certainty, variance in career indecision can also be attributable to actual high school GPA. This result may indicate that remaining undecided about which occupational path to pursue involves an examination of past (as well as present) achievements in considering the likelihood of eventual success. In addition, while it is certainly not a major problem to enter college undecided on an eventual career, previous accomplishments (including actual high school GPA) may have served to eliminate certain vocational options that have yet to be sufficiently replaced, at least for many of the first-semester freshmen participating in this study.

Generally speaking, these findings serve to support the link between dispositional hope and the career decision-making process. As pointed out by Snyder et al. (1991), hope is initiated within the individual and stems from his or her belief that a

particular goal (in this case, vocational choice) can be accomplished. Consequently, undergraduate students in the sample possessing a high degree of dispositional hope are likely to perceive choosing a career from the perspective of increased agency (i.e., their belief that the goals they set can be achieved).

As a result of their optimistic stance, students with higher dispositional hope likely see vocational choice as a difficulty with a definite and surmountable outcome. As they take steps to successfully implement their solution to this problem, these students' overall self-esteem and sense of optimism will continue to increase, encouraging them to seek even more challenging professional and personal problems to solve in the future. Moreover, should obstacles be encountered during this process, the higher-hope individual is likely to view these merely as temporary setbacks that can be overcome, rather than as permanent obstructions to goal fulfillment.

In contrast, lower-hope students undecided on a career are more likely to view the career decision-making process with higher pessimism and to concentrate on the inevitability of failure rather than on the likelihood that they can adequately choose a satisfying career. Further, these individuals may feel an enveloping sense of indifference to choosing an occupation, with accompanying feelings of fear, anger, or sadness as they attempt to determine how to spend their working lives after completing their education. Given their lack of confidence in setting and accomplishing the objectives they have established for themselves, lower-hope, undecided undergraduates will perceive the process of goal attainment as increasingly futile and unsatisfying. This could lead to eventual avoidance of this activity, which would also serve to eliminate opportunities for change in this area.

Findings also showed that estimated college GPA is positively related to career certainty and negatively associated with career indecision. This potentially suggests that students who have definitely decided on a career will achieve better grades since doing so will directly influence their ability to secure the occupation of their choice. Further, as their sense of investment and confidence in their problem-solving capabilities increases, students with a relatively high college GPA may look forward to tackling more demanding problems, which can serve as an impetus to a more “hopeful” outlook on life.

These findings are supported by previous research connecting dispositional hope with a higher college grade point average (Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989). Further, career indecision has also been linked with lower investment in the academic process and a lower GPA (Elton & Rose, 1971; Lunneborg, 1975; cited in Holland & Holland, 1977). In short, results from the present study have served to establish a predictive relationship between dispositional hope and estimated college GPA with career certainty, as well as between dispositional hope and academic achievement (encompassing both actual high school and estimated college GPA) with career indecision.

### *Hypothesis 2*

The present study also found that the use of approach coping strategies to address the problem of career indecision can be predicted by dispositional hope and academic achievement, whether in college or high school. Preliminary correlations revealed a strong association between dispositional hope and the use of proactive coping mechanisms, which suggests that choosing a vocation can contribute to

increased feelings of optimism and self-efficacy. Further, significant relationships (though of lesser strength) between the use of approach coping mechanisms and academic achievement serve to bolster the interdependent nature of the connections between dispositional hope, academic achievement, and actively seeking ways to cope with the career decision-making process.

The subsequent regression analysis indicated that dispositional hope and estimated college GPA can be used to predict the use of approach coping mechanisms. However, actual high school GPA was not found to be relevant in predicting the use of these strategies. This finding could be a function of the developmental process of late adolescence (i.e., undergraduates, whatever their classification, are required to take more initiative and to be more autonomous than high school students). It could also be the result of the established relationship between the use active coping strategies, increased self-confidence, and higher positive affect (Holahan & Moos, 1987).

Given the ability of dispositional hope and academic achievement to predict the use of approach coping strategies, it is likely that the process of deciding on a vocation is more of a cognitive, rather than an interpersonal, activity. This outcome is consistent with the findings of Chang (1998), who found differences between high- and low-hope undergraduate students in their ability to solve cognitive difficulties, but no significant differences between these two groups in their way of addressing interpersonal problems.

### *Hypothesis 3*

While previous research (e.g., Long & Sangster, 1993; Scheier & Carver, 1985, 1992) has linked increased pessimism (i.e., decreased agency) with the use of more avoidance-type coping mechanisms, this finding was not confirmed by the present

study. Specifically, significant relationships were not detected between the use of avoidance coping strategies and dispositional hope, though a moderate correlation was noted between avoidance coping strategies and career indecision, and mild negative associations were detected between an avoidance of addressing career indecision and academic achievement. This could signify that students with lower GPAs tend to evade problem solving (and miss out on the increase in dispositional hope and self-confidence that goal fulfillment in this area can provide).

### *Limitations*

The external validity of the findings of this study is potentially limited for several reasons. First, the sample involved in this research was limited to both one geographical area (i.e., the southwestern United States) and one population (i.e., undergraduate college students enrolled in Introductory Psychology during the fall semester 2003). Given the lack of previous research linking dispositional hope and academic achievement with the career decision-making process, it is not known if these findings would be applicable to undergraduate students from other areas of the world. Second, individual-difference variables, such as specific age and socio-economic status of each participant's family-of-origin, were not assessed and could have covertly influenced the strength of relationship between any of the variables in this research.

It should also be noted that since 66.6% of the sample were first-semester freshmen, only an approximation of college GPA could be provided by the vast majority of undergraduate students taking part in this study. In addition, many of the freshmen participants in this study predicted that they would achieve a high GPA (i.e., 3.0 or better) at the end of their first semester of college. Moreover, the high correlation

between actual high school and estimated college GPAs suggests that students taking part in this study were likely “projecting” their college GPA based on their academic performance in high school. Overall, these estimates of high GPAs by first-semester freshmen represent a limitation to this study and underscore the need for additional research on this topic using students who are able to report actual, rather than predicted, college GPAs.

Another limitation of the present study concerns the overlap between approach and avoidance coping strategies. Previous research has shown that an individual typically uses several different ways to cope with a given problem (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986) and that these tactics are neither distinct nor mutually exclusive (Cook & Heppner, 1997). Because of this tendency, an individual encountering a stressful situation, such as choosing a career, may draw upon both approach and avoidance coping strategies in such a way that successful resolution of the conflict is achieved. Therefore, these two types of coping strategies are likely not dichotomous and consequently, they cannot be thought of as independent of each other.

#### *Directions for Future Research*

Ensuing research that attempts to examine the effects of hope on coping with choosing a vocation would likely benefit from the inclusion of additional demographic information such as the specific age of each participant and their socio-economic background. This would allow for a degree of generalization not definitively obtained in the present study. In addition, perhaps the ideal time period for gathering data for a project of this nature would be the spring, rather than fall, semester. As discussed in the previous section, this alteration to the protocol used in this study would allow students

to base their college GPA on their actual performance of the previous semester, rather than estimating what their undergraduate grades will be before the end of their first semester in college.

In attempting to continue to apply the effects of dispositional hope on career choice, prospective research needs to examine the specific coping strategies used by students struggling with deciding on a vocation, rather than roughly categorizing them as either approach or avoidance coping strategies, particularly given the overlap between these two types of coping mechanisms. It might also be interesting to compare the particular coping mechanisms used in choosing a profession with those used to address a more personal problem, such as negative affect, or a more relational difficulty, such as marital discord. Future studies of these types could potentially provide additional support or refutation of the findings of this study, as well as the one conducted by Chang (1998).

Finally, a noteworthy finding unrelated to the hypotheses of this study was the moderate correlation between choosing not to cope and remaining undecided about a career. This result serves to bring together the two constructs of avoidance coping strategies (Krohne & Laux, 1982; van der Ploeg, Schwarzer, & Spielberger, 1984; Schwarzer, 1984; Spielberger, 1966, 1972) and career indecision (Fuqua, Newman, & Seaworth, 1988; Fuqua, Seaworth, & Newman, 1987; Hawkins, Bradley, & White, 1977; Kimes & Troth, 1974; Lucas, 1993; Newman, Fuqua, & Seaworth, 1989; Peng, 2001), that had both been linked to negative affect in previous research, but not to each other until now.



In retrospect, this particular finding may not seem surprising given that both constructs involve the absence of directly addressing a problem. However, its discovery was nevertheless unintentional and merits further exploration in research specifically designed to address this relationship.

### *Summary*

The purpose of this study has been to examine the effects of dispositional hope on career indecision and coping with vocational choice among a sample of undergraduate students. While limitations of this study may invite a cautious interpretation and application of its findings, this research has successfully detected a predictive relationship between dispositional hope and career decision-making. It has also been found that dispositional hope can envision the use of more proactive coping mechanisms to address this difficulty. Further, the process of choosing an occupation among undergraduate students is likely to be primarily cognitive in nature with limited interpersonal ramifications. Subsequent research can be used to gauge the effects of individual-difference variables not assessed in this study, as well as to confirm the relevance of its findings when other populations and types of problems are assessed.

## References

- Aldwin, C., Folkman, S., Schaefer, C., Coyne, J.C., & Lazarus, R.S. (1980, September). *Ways of Coping: A process measure*. Paper presented at meetings of American Psychological Association, Montreal.
- Aldwin, C. & Revenson, T.A. (1987). Does coping help? A reexamination of the relation between coping and mental health. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 53, 337-348.
- Anderson, J.R. (1988). *The role of hope in appraisal, goal-setting, expectancy, and coping*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Kansas, Lawrence.
- Arthur, N. (1993). *Demands and coping strategies of postsecondary students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Calgary, Canada.
- Arthur, N. (1998). The effects of stress, depression, and anxiety on postsecondary students' coping strategies. *Journal of College Student Development*, 39(1), 11-22.
- Bandura, A. (1989). Human agency in social cognitive theory. *American Psychologist*, 44, 1175-1184.
- Barnum, D.D., Snyder, C.R., Rapoff, M.A., Mani, M.M., & Thompson, R. (1998). Hope and social support in the psychological adjustment of children who have survived burn injuries and their matched controls. *Children's Health Care*, 27(1), 15-30.
- Beck, A.T., Steer, R.A., Kovacs, M., & Garrison, B. (1985). Hopelessness and eventual suicide: A 10-year prospective study of patients hospitalized with suicidal ideation. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 142, 559-563.

- Beck, A.T., Ward, C.H., Mendelsohn, M., Mock, J., & Erbaugh, J. (1961). An inventory for measuring depression. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 4, 53-63.
- Beck, A.T., Weissman, A., Lester, D., & Trexler, L. (1974). The measurement of pessimism: The hopelessness scale. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 42, 861-865.
- Bergeron, L.M. & Romano, J.L. (1994). The relationships among career decision-making self-efficacy, educational indecision, vocational indecision, and gender. *Journal of College Student Development*, 35, 19-24.
- Betz, N.E. (1992). Career assessment: A review of critical issues. In S.D. Brown & R.W. Lent (Eds.), *Handbook of counseling psychology* (pp. 453-484). New York: Wiley.
- Betz, N.E., Klein, K.L., & Taylor, K.M. (1996). Evaluation of a short form of the career decision-making self-efficacy scale. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 4, 47-57.
- Betz, N.E. & Vuyten, K.K. (1997). Efficacy and outcome expectations influence career exploration and decidedness. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 46, 179-189.
- Bordin, E.S. & Kopplin, D.A. (1973). Motivational conflict and vocational development. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 20, 154-161.
- Buck, J.N. & Daniels, M.H. (1985). *Assessment of career decision making*. Los Angeles: Western Psychological Services.
- Burger, J.M. & Cooper, H.M. (1979). The desirability of control. *Motivation and Emotion*, 3, 381-393.
- Cantril, H. (1964). The human design. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 20, 129-136.

- Carvajal, S.C., Clair, S.D., Nash, S.G., & Evans, R.I. (1998). Relating optimism, hope, and self-esteem to the social influences in deterring substance use in adolescents. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 17*(4), 443-465.
- Carver, C.S., Scheier, M.F., & Weintraub, J.K. (1989). Assessing coping strategies: A theoretically based approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 56*, 267-283.
- Chang, E.C. (1996). Cultural differences in optimism, pessimism, and coping: Predictors of subsequent adjustment in Asian American and Caucasian American college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 43*, 113-123.
- Chang, E.C. (1998). Hope, problem-solving ability, and coping in a college student population: Some implications for theory and practice. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 54*(7), 953-962.
- Chang, E.C. & DeSimone, S.L. (2001). The influence of hope on appraisals, coping, and dysphoria: A test of hope theory. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 20*(2), 117-129.
- Chartrand, J.M., Rose, M.L., Elliott, T.R., Marmarosh, C., & Caldwell, S. (1993). Peeling back the onion: Personality, problem solving, and career decision-making style correlates of career indecision. *Journal of Career Assessment, 1*, 66-82.
- Cook, S.W. & Heppner, P.P. (1997). A psychometric study of three coping measures. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 57*(6), 906-923.

- Cooper, S.E., Fuqua, D.R., & Hartman, B.W. (1984). The relationship of trait indecisiveness to vocational uncertainty, career indecision, and interpersonal characteristics. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 25, 353-356.
- Coyne, J., Aldwin, C., & Lazarus, R. (1981). Depression and coping in stressful episodes. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 90, 439-477.
- Cramer, K.M. & Dyrkacz, L. (1998). Differential prediction of maladjustment scores with the Snyder hope subscales. *Psychological Reports*, 83, 1035-1041.
- Crites, J.O. (1973). *Theory and research handbook for the Career Maturity Inventory*. Monterey, CA: CTB/McGraw Hill.
- Curry, L.A., Snyder, C.R., Cook, D.L., Ruby, B.C., & Rehm, N. (1997). Role of hope in academic and sport achievement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73(6), 1257-1267.
- Dwyer, A.L. & Cummings, A.L. (2001). Stress, self-efficacy, social support, and coping strategies in university students. *Canadian Journal of Counseling*, 35, 208-220.
- Elliott, T.R., Witty, T.E., Herrick, S., & Hoffman, J.T. (1991). Negotiating reality after physical loss: Hope, depression, and disability. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61(4), 608-613.
- Elton, C.F. & Rose, H. (1971). A longitudinal study of the vocationally undecided male student. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 1, 85-92.
- Endler, N.S. & Parker, J.D.A. (1990). Multidimensional assessment of coping: A critical examination. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58, 844-854.

- Farber, M.L. (1968). *Theory of suicide*. New York: Funk & Wagnall's.
- Felton, B.J., Revenson, T.A., & Hinrichsen, G.A. (1984). Stress and coping in the explanation of psychological adjustment among chronically ill adults. *Social Science & Medicine*, 18, 889-898.
- Fibel, B. & Hale, W.D. (1978). The Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale – A new measure. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 46, 924-931.
- Folkman, S. & Lazarus, R.S. (1980). An analysis of coping in a middle-aged community sample. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 21, 219-239.
- Folkman, S. & Lazarus, R.S. (1985). If it changes it must be a process: Study of emotion and coping during three stages of a college examination. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 48(1), 150-170.
- Folkman, S. & Lazarus, R.S. (1988). Coping as a mediator of emotion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54, 466-475.
- Folkman, S., Lazarus, R.S., Dunkel-Schetter, C., DeLongis, A., & Gruen, R. (1986). The dynamics of a stressful encounter: Cognitive appraisal, coping, and encounter outcomes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50, 992-1003.
- Folkman, S., Lazarus, R.S., Pimley, S., & Novacek, J. (1987). Age differences in stress and coping processes. *Psychology and Aging*, 2, 171-184.
- Fouad, N.A. (1994). Annual review 1991-1993: Vocational choice, decision-making, assessment, and intervention. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 45, 125-176.
- Frank, J.D. (1968). The role of hope in psychotherapy. *International Journal of Psychiatry*, 5, 383-395.

- Franken, R.E. & Brown, D.J. (1996). The need to win is not adaptive: The need to win, coping strategies, hope, and self-esteem. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 20(6), 805-808.
- Frankl, V. (1963). *Man's search for meaning*. New York: Washington Square Press.
- French, T.M. (1952). *The integration of behavior: Vol. 1. Basic postulates*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fuqua, D.R. & Hartman, B.W. (1983). Differential diagnosis and treatment of career indecision. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 62, 27-29.
- Fuqua, D.R. & Newman, J.L. (1989). An examination of the relations among career subscales. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 36, 487-491.
- Fuqua, D.R., Newman, J.L., & Seaworth, T.B. (1988). Relation of state and trait anxiety to different components of career indecision. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 35, 154-158.
- Fuqua, D.R., Seaworth, T.B., & Newman, J.L. (1987). The relationship of career indecision and anxiety: A multivariate examination. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 30, 175-186.
- Gaffner, D.C. & Hazler, R.J. (2002). Factors related to indecisiveness and career indecision in undecided college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 43(3), 317-327.
- Gall, M.D., Borg, W.R., & Gall, J.P. (1996). *Educational research: An introduction*. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers USA.
- Ganster, D.C., Fusilier, M.R., & Mayes, B.T. (1986). Role of social support in the experience of stress at work. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71, 102-110.

- Gibb, J. (1990). *The Hope Scale revisited: Further validation of a measure of individual differences in the hope motive*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- Gillespie, D. & Hillman, S.B. (1993). *Impact of self-efficacy expectations on adolescent career choice*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 360 572).
- Gordon, V.N. & Osipow, S.H. (1976). *The relationship between the Career Decision Scale and demographic characteristics of college freshmen*. Unpublished data, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.
- Gottschalk, L.A. (1974). A hope scale applicable to verbal samples. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 30, 779-785.
- Harney, P. (1989). *The hope scale: Exploration of construct validity and its influence on health*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Kansas, Lawrence.
- Hartman, B.W. (1980). *A study of the construct validity of the Career Decision Scale adapted for graduate students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.
- Hawkins, J.G., Bradley, R.W., & White, G.W. (1977). Anxiety and the process of deciding about a major and vocation. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 24, 398-403.
- Heppner, P.P. & Petersen, C.H. (1982). The development and implications of a personal problem-solving inventory. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 29, 66-75.



- Holahan, C.J. & Moos, R.H. (1987). Personal and contextual determinants of coping strategies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52, 946-955.
- Holland, J.L. (1985). *Making vocational choices: A theory of vocational personalities and work environments* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Holland, J.L. & Holland, J.E. (1977). Vocational indecision: More evidence and speculation. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 24(5), 404-414.
- Holleran, S. & Snyder, C.R. (1990). *Discriminant and convergent validation of the Hope Scale*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Kansas, Lawrence.
- Irving, L.M., Seidner, A.L., Burling, T.A., Pagliarini, R., & Robbins-Sisco, D. (1998). Hope and recovery from substance dependence in homeless veterans. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 17(4), 389-406.
- Irving, L.M., Snyder, C.R., & Crowson, Jr., J.J. (1998). Hope and coping with cancer by college women. *Journal of Personality*, 66(2), 195-214.
- Jones, L.K. (1989). Measuring a three-dimensional construct of career indecision among college students: A revision of the Vocational Decision Scale – the Career Decision Profile. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 36, 477-486.
- Jurgens, J.C. (2000). The undecided student: Effects of combining levels of treatment parameters on career certainty, career indecision, and career satisfaction. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 48, 237-250.
- Jones, L.K. & Chenery, M.F. (1980). Multiple subtypes among undecided college students: A model and assessment instrument. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 27, 469-477.

- Kimes, H.G. & Troth, W.A. (1974). Relationship of trait anxiety to career decisiveness. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 21*, 277-280.
- Krohne, H.W. & Rogner, J. (1982). Repression-sensitization as a central construct in coping research. In H.W. Krohne & L. Laux (Eds.), *Achievement, stress, and anxiety* (pp. 167-194). Washington DC: Hemisphere.
- Kraus, L.J. & Hughey, K.F. (1999). The impact of an intervention on career decision-making self-efficacy and career indecision. *Professional School Counseling, 2*(5), 384-390.
- Langelles, C. (1989). *An assessment of hope in a community sample*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Kansas, Lawrence.
- Larson, L.M. & Heppner, P.P. (1985). The relationship of problem-solving appraisal to career decision and indecision. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 26*, 55-65.
- Lazarus, R.S. (1991). Progress on a cognitive-motivational-relational theory of emotion. *American Psychologist, 46*, 819-834.
- Lazarus, R.S. & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York: Springer.
- Lent, R.W., Brown, S.D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance [Monograph]. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 45*, 79-122.
- Lent, R.W., Brown, S.D., Talleyrand, R., McPartland, E.B., David, T., Chopra, S.B., Alexander, M.S., Suthakaran, V., & Chai, C. (2001). Career choice barriers, supports, and coping strategies: College students' expectations. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 60*, 61-72.

- Lewin, K. (1938). The conceptual representation and measurement of psychological forces. *Contributions to Psychological Theory, 1*, 1-36.
- Lewis, H.A. & Kliever, W. (1996). Hope, coping, and adjustment among children with sickle cell disease: Tests of mediator and moderator variables. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 21*(1), 25-41.
- Limburg, D.F. (1980). *A comparison of various student groups on career indecision*. Unpublished master's thesis, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.
- Long, B.C. & Sangster, J.I. (1993). Dispositional optimism/pessimism and coping strategies: Predictors of psychosocial adjustment of rheumatoid and osteoarthritis patients. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 23*, 1069-1091.
- Lounsbury, J.W., Tatum, H.E., Chambers, W., Owens, K.S., & Gibson, L.W. (1999). An investigation of career decidedness in relation to "big five" personality constructs and life satisfaction. *College Student Journal, 33*, 646-652.
- Lucas, M.S. (1993). A validation of types of career indecision at a counseling center. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 40*, 440-446.
- Lucas, M.S. & Epperson, D.L. (1990). Types of vocational undecidedness: A replication and refinement. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 37*, 382-388.
- Lunneborg, P.W. (1975). Interest differentiation in high school and vocational indecision in college. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 7*, 297-303.
- Magaletta, P.R. & Oliver, J.M. (1999). The hope construct, will, and ways: Their relation with self-efficacy, optimism, and general well-being. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 55*(5), 539-551.

- Mathieu, P.S., Sowa, C.J., & Niles, S.G. (1993). Differences in career self-efficacy among women. *Journal of Career Development, 19*, 187-197.
- McCrae, R.R. (1982). Age differences in the use of coping mechanisms. *Journal of Gerontology, 37*, 454-460.
- McCrae, R.R. (1984). Situational determinants of coping responses: Loss, threat, and challenge. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 46*, 919-928.
- Meier, S.T. (1991). Vocational behavior, 1988-1990: Vocational choice, decision-making, career development interventions, and assessment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 39*, 131-181.
- Meldahl, J.M. & Muchinsky, P.M. (1997). The neurotic dimension of vocational indecision: Gender comparability? *Journal of Career Assessment, 5*(3), 317-331.
- Melges, R. & Bowlby, J. (1969). Types of hopelessness in psychopathological processes. *Archives of General Psychiatry, 20*, 690-699.
- Menninger, K. (1959). The academic lecture on hope. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 109*, 481-491.
- Meyer, B.W. & Winer, J.L. (1993). The Career Decision Scale and neuroticism. *Journal of Career Assessment, 1*, 171-180.
- Moos, R.H. (1993). *Coping Resources Inventory manual*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Mowrer, O.H. (1960). *The psychology of hope*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.
- Needles, D.J. & Abramson, L.Y. (1990). Positive life events, attributional style, and hopefulness: Testing a model of recovery from depression. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 99*(2), 156-165.

- Newman, J.L., Fuqua, D.R., & Seaworth, T.B. (1989). The role of anxiety in career indecision: Implications for diagnosis and treatment. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 37, 221-231.
- Niece, D. & Bradley, R.W. (1979). Relationship of age, sex, and educational groups to career decisiveness. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 14, 271-278.
- O'Brien, T.B. & DeLongis, A. (1996). The interactional context of problem-, emotion-, and relationship-focused coping: The role of the big five personality factors. *Journal of Personality*, 64(4), 775-813.
- Onwuegbuzie, A.J. (1998). Role of hope in predicting anxiety about statistics. *Psychological Reports*, 82, 1315-1320.
- Onwuegbuzie, A.J. & Snyder, C.R. (2000). Relations between hope and graduate students' coping strategies for studying and examination taking. *Psychological Reports*, 86, 803-806.
- Osipow, S.H. (1978). *High school and college norms for the Career Decision Scale*. Unpublished data, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.
- Osipow, S.H. (1987). *Career Decision Scale manual*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Osipow, S.H., Carney, C.G., & Barak, A. (1976). A scale of educational-vocational undecidedness: A typological approach. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 9, 233-243.
- Osipow, S.H., Carney, C.G., Winer, J.L., Yanico, B., & Koschier, M. (1976). *The Career Decision Scale* (3<sup>rd</sup> revision). Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc.

- Osipow, S.H. & Fitzgerald, L.F. (1996). *Theories of career development* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Osipow, S.H. & Schweikert, D. (1981). The Career Decision Scale: A test of concurrent validity. *Psychological Reports*, 48, 759-761.
- Parkes, K.R. (1986). Coping in stressful episodes: The role of individual differences, environmental factors, and situational characteristics. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51, 1277-1292.
- Peng, H. (2001). Career group counseling in undecided college female seniors' state anxiety and career indecision. *Psychological Reports*, 88, 996-1004.
- van der Ploeg, H.M., Schwarzer, R., & Spielberger, C.D. (1984). *Advances in test anxiety research* (Vol. 3). Hillsdale NJ: Erlbaum.
- Robbins, S.B. (1985). Validity estimates for the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, 18(2), 64-71.
- Roe, A. (1956). *The psychology of occupations*. New York: Wiley.
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Salomone, P.R. (1982). Difficult cases in career counseling: II. The indecisive client. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 60, 496-500.
- Savickas, M.L. & Jarjoura, D. (1991). The Career Decision Scale as a type indicator. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 38, 85-90.
- Schachtel, E. (1959). *Metamorphosis*. New York: Basic Books.

- Scheier, M.F. & Carver, C.S. (1985). Optimism, coping, and health: Assessment and implications of generalized outcome expectancies. *Health Psychology, 4*, 219-247.
- Scheier, M.F. & Carver, C.S. (1987). Dispositional optimism and physical well-being: The influence of generalized outcome expectancies. *Journal of Personality, 55*, 169-210.
- Scheier, M.F. & Carver, C.S. (1992). Effects of optimism on psychological and physical well-being: Theoretical overview and empirical update. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 16*, 201-228.
- Scheier, M.F., Weintraub, J.K., & Carver, C.S. (1986). Coping with stress: Divergent strategies of optimists and pessimists. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*, 1257-1264.
- Schwarzer, R. (Ed.). (1984). *The self in anxiety, stress, and depression*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Sherwin, E.D., Elliott, T.R., Rybarczyk, B.D., Frank, R.G., Hanson, S., & Hoffman, J. (1992). Negotiating the reality of caregiving: Hope, burnout, and nursing. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 11*(2), 129-139.
- Slaney, R.B., Palko-Nonemaker, D., & Alexander, R. (1981). An investigation of two measures of career indecision. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 18*, 92-103.
- Slaney, R.B. (1988). The assessment of career decision making. In W.B. Walsh & S.H. Osipow (Eds.), *Career decision making* (pp. 33-76). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Snyder, C.R. (1989). Reality negotiation: From excuses to hope and beyond. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 8*(2), 130-157.

- Snyder, C.R. (1999). Hope, goal-blocking thoughts, and test-related anxieties. *Psychological Reports, 84*, 206-208.
- Snyder, C.R., Harris, C., Anderson, J.R., Holleran, S.A., Irving, L.A., Sigmon, S.T., Yoshinobu, L., Gibb, J., Langelle, C., & Harney, P. (1991). The will and the ways: Development and validation of an individual-differences measure of hope. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60*(4), 570-585.
- Snyder, C.R. LaPointe, A.B., Crowson Jr., J.J., & Early, S. (1998). Preferences of high- and low-hope people for self-referential input. *Cognition and Emotion, 12*(6), 807-823.
- Snyder, C.R., Rand, K.L., & Sigmon, D.R. (2002). Hope theory: A member of the positive psychology family. In C.R. Snyder & S.J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (pp. 257-276). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Spielberger, C.D. (Ed.). (1966). *Anxiety and behavior*. New York: Academic Press.
- Spielberger, C.D. (Ed.). (1972). *Anxiety: Current trends in theory and research* (Vols. 1&2). New York: Academic Press.
- Stotland, E. (1969). *The psychology of hope*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.
- Strack, S., Carver, C.S., & Blaney, P.H. (1987). Predicting successful completion of an aftercare program following treatment for alcoholism: The role of dispositional optimism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 53*, 579-584.
- Super, D.E. (1953). A theory of vocational development. *American Psychologist, 8*, 185-190.



- Sweeney, M.L. & Schill, T.R. (1998). The association between self-defeating personality characteristics, career indecision, and vocational identity. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 6(1), 69-81.
- Tabachnick, B.G. & Fidell, L.S. (1996). *Using multivariate statistics*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Taylor, K.M. (1979). *The relationships among vocational indecision, fear of success, and locus of control as moderated by sex and ability*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Washington State University, Pullman, WA.
- Taylor, K.M. & Betz, N.E. (1983). Applications of self-efficacy theory to the understanding and treatment of career indecision. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 22, 63-81.
- Taylor, K.M. & Popma, J. (1990). An examination of the relationships among career decision-making, self-efficacy, career salience, locus of control, and vocational indecision. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 37, 347-359.
- Tinsley, H.E.A. (1992). Career decision making and career indecision. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 41, 209-211.
- Vitaliano, P.P., Russo, J., Carr, J.E., Maiuro, R.D., & Becker, J. (1985). The Ways of Coping Checklist: Revision and psychometric properties. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 20, 3-26.
- Westbrook, B.W., Cutts, C.C., Madison, S.S., & Arcia, M.A. (1980). The validity of the Crites' Model of Career Maturity. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 16, 249-281.

Yoshinobu, L.R. (1989). *Construct validation of the Hope Scale: Agency and pathways components*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Kansas, Lawrence.

Table 1

*Correlation Matrix of Hypothesis 1 Variables (N = 319)*

	Total Hope	Predicted College GPA	H.S. GPA	Career Certainty	Career Indecision
<b>Predicted College GPA</b>	.25*	1.00			
<b>H.S. GPA</b>	.16*	.42*	1.00		
<b>Career Cert</b>	.27**	.17**	.09	1.00	
<b>Career Ind</b>	-.15**	-.15*	-.14*	-.53*	1.00

\*  $P < .01$

\*\*  $P < .003$

Table 2

*Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Career Certainty (N = 319)*

Variable	R Square	F	B	SE B	Beta
<b>Step 1</b>					
Total Hope	.03	9.74*	.16	.04	.26
<b>Step 2</b>					
Predicted College GPA	.09	15.70*	.10	.05	.11

\*  $P < .003$

Table 3

*Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Career Indecision (N = 319)*

Variable	R Square	F	B	SE B	Beta
<b>Step 1</b>					
Total Hope	.02	6.99*	-.39	.19	-.12*
<b>Step 2</b>					
Predicted College GPA	.04	5.69*	-.56	.27	-.12
<b>Step 1</b>					
Total Hope	.02	7.49*	-.44	.18	-.13*
<b>Step 2</b>					
H.S. GPA	.04	6.09*	-.74	.34	-.12*

\*  $P < .01$

Table 4

*Correlation Matrix of Hypotheses 2 and 3 Variables (N = 319)*

	Total Hope	Predicted College GPA	H.S. GPA	Career Certainty	Career Indecision	App Coping Mech	Avoid Coping Mech
<b>Coll GPA</b>	.25*	1.00					
<b>H.S. GPA</b>	.16*	.42*	1.00				
<b>Career Cer</b>	.27**	.17**	.09	1.00			
<b>Career Ind</b>	-.15**	-.15*	-.14*	-.53*	1.00		
<b>App Cop</b>	.37**	.25**	.18**	.24**	-.04	1.00	
<b>Avoid Cop</b>	.03	-.12*	-.08	-.14*	.46**	.29*	1.00

\*  $P < .01$

\*\*  $P < .003$

Table 5

*Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting the Use of Approach Coping Responses  
in Choosing a Career (N = 319)*

Variable	R Square	F	B	SE B	Beta
<b>Step 1</b>					
Total Hope	.14	47.30*	1.11	.18	.33*
<b>Step 2</b>					
Predicted College GPA	.16	28.89*	.81	.27	.17*

\*  $P < .000$

## APPENDICES



**APPENDIX A**  
**Dissertation Prospectus**

Running head: DISPOSITIONAL HOPE, COPING, AND CAREER INDECISION

THE EFFECTS OF DISPOSITIONAL HOPE  
ON COPING WITH CAREER INDECISION  
IN A SAMPLE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

A PROSPECTUS

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty  
of the College of Education of the  
University of Oklahoma

by

John Hurley, M.A.

Fall 2003

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I :INTRODUCTION.....	89
Literature Review.....	90
Dispositional Hope.....	90
Historical Perspective.....	90
Basic Components of Snyder's Hope Theory.....	92
Empirical Support for Snyder's Hope Theory.....	96
Non-Specific Coping.....	102
Basic Components of Non-Specific Coping.....	102
Non-Specific Coping and Undergraduate Students.....	106
Career Indecision.....	110
Career Indecision: Basic Concepts.....	110
Career Indecision and Other Psychological Constructs.....	113
Literature Review Summary.....	116
The Present Study.....	119
Problem Statement.....	119
Statement of Purpose.....	119
Significance of the Study.....	120
Research Question and Hypotheses.....	121
Definitions of Terms.....	122
Limitations.....	124
Summary of the Present Study.....	125

<b>CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>126</b>
Population and Sample.....	126
Protection of Human Participants.....	126
Instruments.....	127
Career Decision Scale (CDS).....	128
Reliability.....	128
Construct and Criterion Validity.....	129
Coping Resources Inventory (CRI).....	130
Reliability and Validity.....	131
Trait Hope Scale (THS).....	131
Reliability and Validity.....	132
Data Collection.....	133
Treatment of Data.....	133

The Effects of Dispositional Hope on Coping with Career Indecision  
in a Sample of Undergraduate College Students

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Previous research has demonstrated that the decision to pursue a career is affected by characteristics within the individual (Gaffner & Hazler, 2002). Specifically, three factors thought to influence career indecision include self-efficacy (Betz & Voyten, 1997; Taylor & Betz, 1983), locus of control (Fuqua & Hartman, 1983; Lucas & Epperson, 1990), and anxiety (Fuqua, Newman, & Seaworth, 1988; Fuqua, Seaworth, & Newman, 1987; Hawkins, Bradley, & White, 1977; Kimes & Troth, 1974; Newman, Fuqua, & Seaworth, 1989; Peng, 2001).

Dispositional hope has been shown to be conceptually similar to self-efficacy and locus of control in that all three mediate the way future goals will be pursued (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991). Perceived as the integration of dispositional optimism and self-efficacy, dispositional hope is the pervasive conviction that a desired object is attainable. In other words, this overarching attribute is composed of two interrelated but distinct constructs: the belief that a particular objective can be met (i.e., optimism or agency) and the specific means and/or plan to acquire this end (i.e., self-efficacy or pathways; Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991).

Coping mechanisms have been demonstrated to facilitate the process of both successful goal acquisition (Chang, 1998; Snyder et al., 1991) and choosing a vocational option (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Moreover, coping mechanisms are often crucial in the manifestation of both of these processes, potentially allowing them to serve as a link between the thoughts and actions involved in goal fulfillment on the

one hand, and the psychological and interpersonal ramifications of career indecision on the other.

### Literature Review

This section will present the relevant conceptual and empirical findings of dispositional hope, non-specific coping responses, and career indecision. In order to accomplish this objective, the sections pertaining to non-specific coping and career indecision will be divided into two subsections: one describing the conceptual framework of the construct in question and the other delineating the empirical findings that support the rationale for the present research. The dispositional hope section will also follow this format; however, an additional section addressing the historical perspective of this construct will be included because of dispositional hope's seminal importance to the present study.

#### *Dispositional Hope*

*Historical Perspective.* Throughout history, the concept of hope and its effects on behavior has received considerable attention from theologians, writers, and others interested in the motivations that drive human endeavors. For example, Menninger (1959) pointed out that both the early Christian St. Paul and Reformation leader Martin Luther believed that hope is "the impetus behind everything that is done in the world" (p. 483). British author Samuel Johnson supported this belief by writing that hope is a necessary condition for all human actions, and the American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson posited that hope is the best judge of man's wisdom (Menninger, 1959).

Beginning in the 1950s, the therapeutic utility of hope came to the attention of several prominent psychiatrists (e.g., Frank, 1961, 1968; Frankl, 1963; Melges &

Bowlby, 1969; Menninger, 1959; Schachtel, 1959) and psychologists (e.g., Cantril, 1964; Farber, 1968; French, 1952; Lewin, 1951; Mowrer, 1960; Stotland, 1969). This increased scrutiny was likely the result of the optimism that prevailed in American society after World War II. This supposition is supported by Frank (1968) who opined that hope has the ability to inspire feelings of confidence and well-being. Further, hope can serve as the catalyst to accomplishment by encouraging favorable change in one's existence, "usually in relation to one's own actions or an anticipated environmental event" (Frank, 1968; p. 391).

Following these conceptual speculations, three teams of researchers in the 1970s and 1980s attempted to develop individual difference instruments that could use hope as a means to diagnose certain behaviors (Beck, Weissman, Lester, & Trexler, 1974; Gottschalk, 1974; Scheier & Carver, 1985). In constructing a hope scale applicable to verbal samples, Gottschalk (1974) found that hope was positively related to personal achievement and fulfilling human relations. In addition, hope was negatively associated with anxiety, overt and covert hostility toward others, hostility directed towards the self, social alienation, and personal disorganization. The instrument developed by Gottschalk (1974) was the first to detect a relationship between hope and other constructs that can affect emotional well-being. However, its external validity was limited because of its low reliability and qualitative approach to the assessment of hope.

At about this same time, Beck, Weissman, Lester, and Trexler (1974) borrowed from Stotland's (1969) hypothesis that the antithesis of hope (i.e., hopelessness) is often a global expectancy about the outcome of current actions. Based on this premise, a measure of hopelessness was formulated to predict various pathological behaviors

(Beck, Steer, Kovacs, & Garrison, 1985). This scale was perceived as an improvement over the Hope Scale of Gottschalk (1974) due to higher levels of interrater reliability and the ease with which its findings could be analyzed and manipulated using quantitative statistical methods. Though this scale was designed to measure the absence of hope, it can be considered the precursor to the Trait Hope Scale used in the present study. This is because its findings indicated that an individual's position on the hope/hopelessness continuum could provide empirically sound information about other aspects of their emotional and behavioral functioning.

Like the Beck Hopelessness Scale (Beck, Weissman, Lester, & Trexler, 1974), the scale developed to measure dispositional optimism by Scheier and Carver (1985) was germane to the formation of Snyder's Trait Hope Scale (THS; Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991). These measures are similar to each other in that both concentrate on potential individual differences as the reasons for discrepancies in outcome expectations. Further, it was effective in predicting responses to two health-related indices (Scheier & Carver, 1987; Strack, Carver, & Blaney, 1987) that were tested in the interval between its elaboration and the development of Snyder's Trait Hope Scale. Overall, these findings provided further support for the feasibility of quantifying a similar (though distinct) dispositional construct.

*Basic Components of Snyder's Hope Theory.* Snyder (1989) posited that the active process of hoping is one of the components that exemplify reality negotiation. Reality negotiation is "an overarching construct that potentially encompasses a multitude of potential psychological mechanisms by which people attempt to decrease their linkage to bad acts and increase their linkage to good acts" (p. 137). In the process



of this mediation, hope is an essential ingredient that can cause obstacles and difficulties to seem more tolerable as individuals seek to fulfill their life goals and plans (Snyder et al., 1991).

The generally accepted definition of hope stresses a belief in the possibility that something desired and actively pursued may actually come to pass (Snyder 1989; Snyder et al., 1991). Moreover, at the time the theory of dispositional hope was conceived, the body of psychological research contained virtually no information about how the different components of the hope construct interacted to produce hopeful/hopeless cognitions, affect, or behavior. Further, until the development of Snyder's Hope Theory (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991) it remained unclear how the thoughts, feelings, and actions that derive from the presence or absence of hope could be measured. This was despite the relative diagnostic utility of instruments that had been previously constructed (i.e., Beck, Weissman, Lester, & Trexler, 1974; Gottschalk, 1974) to gauge this construct.

In developing his theory, Snyder (1989; Snyder et al., 1991) postulated that hope is a multidimensional construct that is composed of two interrelated components. First, hopeful thinking and actions are driven by the individual's belief that certain objectives can be accomplished (i.e., the agency component). Similar to dispositional optimism, this ingredient "refers to a sense of successful determination in meeting goals in the past, present, and future" (Snyder, et al., 1991, p. 570).

The second element of Snyder's Hope Theory refers to the degree to which hopeful perceptions are influenced by the anticipation that workable routes connected to desired goals are both available and feasible. This ingredient (i.e., the pathways

component) refers to a sense of efficacy in generating successful plans to meet goals (Snyder et al., 1991). Taken together, these two parts of Snyder's Hope Theory are reciprocal, additive, and positively related, though not synonymous. The reciprocity of hope is suggested by the action between the expectancy that a goal can be achieved (i.e., agency) and the belief that there are one or more possible ways to make this happen (i.e., pathways; Snyder et al., 1991).

Given the strength of the relationship between these two ingredients, it is obvious that both agency and pathways are considered necessary to the successful attainment of goals. In other words, in order for positive movement towards goals to occur, both a sense of agency and pathways must become activated (Snyder 1989; Snyder et al., 1991). Interestingly, hope is also conceptualized to be defined (and occasionally redefined) by each individual as they assess the plausibility of obtaining their objectives (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991).

Viewed from this perspective, hope is an egocentric idea that taps into an individual's belief in their sense of efficacy in relation to the achievement of either major or minor goals. While important external events and circumstances can invite a redefinition of their sense of effectiveness, it is ultimately left to the individual to interpret environmental cues and incorporate any alterations in perception into their cognitive, affective, and behavioral frameworks (Snyder et al., 1991).

Snyder et al. (1991) also theorizes that the quality of emotion for a specific goal depends on the person's perceived hope that this particular goal will be obtained. Since dispositional hope is by definition a global trait and consistent across situations and time, individuals generally can be defined as either high-hope or low-hope. High-hope

individuals are thought to assess a situation considered worthy of their efforts in terms of high agency and pathways. Consequently, these individuals perceive a relatively high chance of goal fulfillment and are more inclined to concentrate on the likelihood of success rather than on the prospect of failure. They are also more likely to possess a constructive sense of challenge and positive affect (e.g., personal satisfaction) as activities related to goal-attainment are conceived and implemented (Snyder et al., 1991).

On the other hand, some individuals can be classified as possessing a low-hope outlook on goal fulfillment. According to Snyder et al. (1991), these people harbor inadequate agency and pathways in seeking to meet desired goals. As a result of this outlook, there is likely a lower probability of goal attainment, a focus on the inevitability of failure rather than the feasibility of success, a pervasive sense of indifference and apathy concerning desired objectives, and a comparatively negative emotional state during goal-related activities (Snyder et al., 1991).

A comparison of the attributes of high- and low-hope individuals yields additional hypotheses about how they are likely to select goals to be achieved as well as address adversity when obstacles to goal fulfillment present themselves. Snyder et al. (1991) speculated that high-hope people are inclined to have more goals across the various areas of life (e.g., objectives pertaining to their family, friends, or occupation). Further, more difficult aims will probably be selected and attained due to their elevated degree of agency and pathways. There is also a stronger possibility that goals and any ensuing impediments will be perceived with a more problem-focused, constructive perspective (Snyder et al., 1991). In contrast, lower-hope persons are more apt to

decrease their agency and pathways (i.e., give up) when faced with formidable obstructions to successful goal accomplishment (Snyder et al., 1991).

In formulating his conceptualization of dispositional hope, Snyder and colleagues (1991) have distinguished this construct from similar but discrete individual difference variables, such as dispositional optimism (Scheier & Carver, 1985) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989). Specifically, dispositional hope is thought to differ from dispositional optimism primarily in the relationship between the outcome of goal attainment and the individual's perceived effectiveness in meeting their objectives. In other words, while dispositional optimism is similar to the agency component of Snyder's Hope Theory (Snyder 1989; Snyder et al., 1991), dispositional hope also involves planning and progress towards goals (i.e., pathways), a component that is missing from dispositional optimism (Snyder et al., 1991).

Hope is also different from Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1989) in that self-efficacy posits that expectancies based on personal recognition of effectiveness are crucial motivators for behavior. While this component resembles the pathways segment of Snyder's Hope Theory (Snyder 1989; Snyder et al., 1991), a complete utilization of the cognitive set requires both agency (i.e., optimism) and pathways (i.e., self-efficacy). Furthermore, by concentrating on only one of these facets, the ability of the construct(s) to predict subsequent goal-related activity is decreased (Snyder et al., 1991). Magaletta and Oliver (1999) have since empirically confirmed that these three constructs are related but not identical.

*Empirical Support for Snyder's Hope Theory.* Several quantitative research studies were conducted in the late 1980s in an attempt to provide empirical validation

for the assumptions of Snyder's Hope Theory (e.g., Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Langelles, 1989; Yoshinobu, 1989). However, it should be noted at the outset that no gender differences have ever been found in the level of reported hope across any sample since the construction of Snyder's Trait Hope Scale (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002).

In examining the contributions of each of these studies, Anderson (1988) found that higher-hope (as opposed to lower-hope) students were more likely to set and strive for higher grades, to persist in their belief that higher grades continued to be feasible despite early feedback that conflicted with this view, and to actually achieve these higher grades. Harney (1989) provided additional support for this finding by demonstrating that Trait Hope Scale scores contribute unique variance in the degree to which higher-hope students attain high grades. Taken together, these findings led Snyder et al. (1991) to conclude that academic achievement is related to higher hope.

Two of these seminal studies also provided empirical support for specific components of Snyder's Hope Theory. Langelles (1989) confirmed that the number of goals that an individual has across various domains has a positive relationship with their level of dispositional hope. In addition, Yoshinobu (1989) found that the degree to which a person sustains agency and pathways behaviors varies directly with their level of hope as measured by Snyder's Trait Hope Scale (Snyder, 1989).

Since this initial research, a person's amount of hope has also been found to predict their level of other individual difference variables. However, it appears from the findings of two particular studies that hope is more likely to affect the perception of physical injuries rather than the outcome of psychological problems (Elliott, Witty, Herrick, & Hoffman, 1991; Needles & Abramson, 1990). Specifically, the interaction

between depression, positive life events, and attributional style (Needles & Abramson, 1990) and the degree of depression and psychosocial impairment following an acquired physical disability (Elliott et al., 1991) were examined. In both cases, hope was found to potentially mitigate the effects of depression, though Needles and Abramson (1990) found that this was more likely to occur when the participants possessed both an enhancing attributional style and an increase in positive life events.

On the other hand, Elliott et al. (1991) discovered that the pathways component of Snyder's Hope Theory (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991) gradually tempers the level of sadness and impairment following the acquisition of a severe physical handicap. The authors concluded that the time elapsed since the physical trauma allowed the sufferer to develop effective solutions to problems developed earlier in the course of the injury (Elliott et al., 1991). Overall, the findings of these two studies suggest that the availability and feasibility of potential solutions to problems facilitate the degree of hope expressed, which is congruent with the basic assumptions of Snyder's Hope Theory (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991).

With regard to the mitigation of emotional states and personality attributes, Chang and DeSimone (2001) have found that dispositional hope is negatively related to dysphoria, suggesting that higher-hope individuals experience less sadness and depression. In addition, these authors found that dispositional hope predicted the presence of dysphoria independent of coping mechanisms used to address this problem. Further, higher-hope people have also been found to prefer listening to positive self-statements that engender increased self-esteem and positive affect (Snyder, LaPointe, Crowson, & Early, 1998) and to see themselves as possessing the power to shape their

own lives (Cramer & Dyrkacz, 1998). Generally speaking, these three studies suggest that dispositional hope has an effect on mood, affect, self-concept, and autonomy, which supports many of the basic assumptions about the effects of dispositional hope on psychological functioning (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991).

Dispositional hope has been found to effect the perception of obstacles of both employees and patients of the health-care system (Barnum, Snyder, Rapoff, Mani, & Thompson, 1998; Lewis & Kliever, 1996; Sherwin, Elliott, Rybarczyk, Frank, Hanson, & Hoffman, 1992), as well as the substance use practices of both adolescents (Carvajal, Clair, Nash, & Evans, 1998) and homeless veterans (Irving, Seidner, Burling, Pagliarini, & Robbins-Sisco, 1998). Specifically, Sherwin et al. (1992) found that dispositional hope was related to all three primary symptoms of burnout in registered nurses. Overall, these authors found that depersonalization and emotional exhaustion showed a negative association and personal accomplishment a positive association to dispositional hope, which lends credence to the belief that dispositional hope is the negative correlate to burnout (Sherwin et al., 1992).

In examining the relationship between dispositional hope, coping, and adjustment to sickle cell disease, Lewis and Kliever (1996) found that dispositional hope in children, like dispositional hope in adults, was unrelated to anxiety. Moreover, coping appeared to mitigate this relationship, particularly when the specific strategies of active coping, seeking support from significant others, and distraction were utilized. Surprisingly, no significant relationship was detected between dispositional hope, coping, and functional adjustment, though the authors of this study postulated that this

could have been due to the child's lack of control over these factors (Lewis & Kliever, 1996).

Using a forced-entry regression analysis with children who have survived burn injuries and a matched control group, Barnum et al. (1998) discovered that dispositional hope made a significant contribution to the prediction of acting-out behaviors once variance attributable to social support had been accounted for. Though social support did not account for any unique variance above that credited to dispositional hope, this study concluded that both dispositional hope and social support contribute to global self-worth regardless of their order of entry into the regression equation. Further, dispositional hope alone was found to be a unique significant contributor to differences in externalizing behavior. Overall, these findings suggest that while self-concept can be affected by the belief that goals can be attained and by input from the environment, acting-out may serve as a means by which frustration over a lack of goal fulfillment is resolved.

Preventing substance abuse in adolescents (Carvajal et al., 1998) and maintaining abstinence in homeless veterans (Irving, Seidner, et al., 1998) are other problems that may be affected by dispositional hope. Carvajal et al., (1998) found that dispositional hope is negatively related to alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana consumption. Furthermore, this finding remained true even when demographic variables such as parental educational level, ethnic background, and gender were taken into account. Overall, a high degree of these variables were posited to protect children from future illicit substance consumption.



In examining the association between hope and recovery among substance abusing homeless veterans, Irving, Seidner, et al. (1998) found that transitory (i.e., state) hope has a positive relationship with abstinence from drugs and alcohol. In looking at the specific hypotheses of this study, the researchers found that higher amounts of state hope were linked to greater confidence in remaining sober, a higher degree of motivation to stop using drugs/alcohol, more social support from family and friends, and a better quality of life.

In recent years, the construct validity of Snyder's Hope Theory (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991) has also been confirmed in several studies that have used college student samples (e.g., Chang, 1998; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Irving, Snyder, & Crowson, 1998; Onwuegbuzie, 1998; Onwuegbuzie & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1999). Generally speaking, the results of these studies indicate that dispositional hope has a significant effect on the formation and implementation of solutions to problems concerning academic, athletic, health, and global psychological functioning.

Curry et al. (1997) found that differences exist in dispositional hope between college athletes and nonathletes. These authors also determined that dispositional hope (unlike self-esteem, confidence, and mood) is an effective and robust predictor of actual sport achievement. In addition, dispositional hope has been found to be significantly associated with statistical anxiety (Onwuegbuzie, 1998) and coping strategies under testing circumstances (Onwuegbuzie & Snyder, 2000). Interestingly, dispositional hope has also been found to be significantly related to the degree to which female college students acquire knowledge about cancer, as well as hypothesize about how well they would progress through the various stages of this disease (Irving, Snyder, et al., 1998).

In a study whose findings have a direct bearing on the current research project, Chang (1998) attempted to measure the relationship between hope, problem-solving ability, and coping in a college student population. Building on Snyder et al.'s (1991) finding of a significant association between dispositional hope and general problem-solving, Chang designed his research to examine relations between dispositional hope and more specific problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies. Requiring participants to concentrate on both an academic and an interpersonal difficulty, this study found that no significant differences exist between high- and low-hope individuals in addressing stressful interpersonal situations (Chang, 1998).

And yet, Chang (1998) did find that dispositional hope accounts for a significant segment of variance in both academic and interpersonal life satisfaction. This experiment also found that high-hope college students did report greater academic satisfaction, supporting the findings of Snyder et al. (1991). Low-hope college students were found to employ more emotion-focused coping strategies in dealing with stressful academic and interpersonal problems (Chang, 1998).

Overall, this experiment is crucially important to the present study in that it demonstrates that dispositional hope has a significant effect on the coping strategies used to resolve stressful academic and interpersonal situations. Further, Chang (1998) has shown that dispositional hope can be utilized to predict life satisfaction across different areas of functioning beyond that accounted for by coping mechanisms.

#### *Non-Specific Coping*

*Basic Components of Non-Specific Coping.* Non-specific coping (i.e., coping mechanisms not used exclusively to address or resolve any one distinct problem or

stressful situation) has been defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1985) as “the cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage (i.e., master, reduce, or tolerate) a troubled person-environment relationship” (p. 152). Above all, coping is characterized by change (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985) and has historically been perceived as a response to negative affect (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). Researchers have also posited that the individual’s specific coping response utilized in a time of stress directly affects the perceived ramifications of this event (Endler & Parker, 1990; Ganster, Fusilier & Mayes, 1986). Research has also demonstrated that negative affect (e.g., anxiety) can significantly interfere with coping (e.g., Krohne & Laux, 1982; van der Ploeg, Schwarzer, & Spielberger, 1984; Schwarzer, 1984; Spielberger, 1966, 1972). Furthermore, this occurs to the extent that individuals are not prepared to satisfactorily cope with events perceived as stressful (Arthur, 1993).

In addition to these empirical findings, research has also shown that more than one alternative for coping is likely to exist (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986) and that these different alternatives are neither distinct nor mutually exclusive (Cook & Heppner, 1997). As a result, more than one emotional response is possible (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988), as are a wider range of problem-solving strategies and emotional adjustments (e.g., Felton, Revenson, & Hinrichsen, 1984; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980, 1985; Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986; Folkman, Lazarus, Pimley, & Novacek, 1987; McCrae, 1982, 1984; Vitaliano, Russo, Carr, Maiuro, & Becker, 1985).

The construct of non-specific coping is thought to consist of two general types. The first type, known as problem-focused (or instrumental) coping, is directed at

problem-solving or other efforts intended to decrease the effects of external stress. The second type of coping, known as emotion-focused (or palliative) coping, is utilized to mitigate the influences of negative affect (e.g., anger, depression) that is related to or cued by a specific setting (Arthur, 1998; Lazarus & Folkman, 1980).

Typically, most stressful situations engender a combination of both problem- and emotion-focused coping responses (Lazarus & Folkman, 1980). However, an individual is more likely to draw upon problem-focused techniques to constructively resolve stress through such approaches as logical analysis or positive reframing (Moos, 1992). On the other hand, emotion-focused responses are usually employed when it is perceived that nothing can be done to address the problem in question and can potentially involve such indirect activities as avoidance or resignation (Moos, 1992). The results of an experiment conducted by Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, and DeLongis (1986) support these findings pertaining to changes in coping as a function of the perceived outcome of the current stressful event.

Since its inception, this particular theory has been attacked for failing to take into account other potential factors that could be used in the general process of coping. For example, research has suggested that coping may possess more specific components under the general rubrics of problem- and emotion-focused coping. Further, coping mechanisms that are not classified as problem-focused are perceived to be derivations of more emotion-focused strategies (e.g., Aldwin, Folkman, Schaefer, Coyne, & Lazarus, 1980; Aldwin & Revenson, 1987; Coyne, Aldwin, & Lazarus, 1981; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986; Moos, 1992; Parkes, 1984; Scheier, Weintraub, & Carver, 1986).

Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) hypothesized that problem-focused coping strategies can be further subdivided into factors that indicate the action state at the time of the coping response, as well as factors that reflect the specific activities involved in this endeavor. Active coping involves direct activity, movement, or progress towards the reduction of stress. Since this factor calls for overt action, it can be an extension of Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) general concept of problem-focused coping. Further, active coping resembles Moos (1992) concept of approach coping because both require cognitive and/or behavioral efforts to resolve the problem.

The coping component of planning to deal with a stressor involves both the rational appraisal and implementation of definite thought(s) and action(s) that can be used to alleviate tension. Specifically, the process of planning requires the cognitive development of behavioral strategies, as well as consideration of what to do and when to do it. Only after these initial steps have been followed are the selected coping strategies executed (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Moos, 1992).

Seeking out social support is another pastime that Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) have termed a problem-focused coping activity, though it has also been termed an emotion-focused one due to its emphasis on the venting of feelings in a sympathetic and understanding environment (Moos, 1992). Seeking social support for instrumental reasons is the problem-focused motivation for this endeavor; moreover, it involves seeking verbal feedback from significant others in the form of advice, assistance, or information. Since many anxiety-provoking situations invite individuals to elicit both knowledge and emotional support from others, seeking out social support

is an excellent example of a coping mechanism that can be conceptualized as containing both problem- and emotion-focused components.

*Non-Specific Coping and College Students: Empirical Findings.* In attempting to determine the specific coping strategies used by undergraduate college students to deal with an examination, Folkman and Lazarus (1985) found that the participants' appraisals varied as a function of changes within the stressful situation. Furthermore, results from this study suggest that both coping functions can be used in many intense circumstances.

In this same study, Lazarus and Folkman (1985) also found that at least 94% of the students employed both problem- and emotion-focused coping responses during all three stages of this event (i.e., the anticipation stage before the examination, the waiting period before grades were posted after the test, and after the results became known to the participants). Further, the support required by people undergoing stress is dictated by the particular demands of their struggle and by any ensuing changes as their dilemma continues to unfold. Overall, this suggests that utilizing social support is a coping process that changes in relation to time and to shifts in relations with the external environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1985).

The findings of this study underscore the dynamic and changing nature of coping mechanisms. Further, participants were found to be likely to experience contradictory emotions and cognitions in their attempts to resolve anxiety-provoking circumstances. This provides further evidence for both the complex ways in which people cope with the events in their lives, as well as the plethora of options they have available to accomplish this aim (Lazarus & Folkman, 1985).

Subsequent research demonstrated that coping can mitigate both the interpretation and the response to stressful situations. This has been shown to occur in the formulation and implementation of strategies used to deal effectively with these encounters (Arthur, 1998; Lazarus & Folkman, 1988; Santiago-Rivera, Bernstein, & Gard, 1995) as well as in response to the quantity of stress inherent in the situation in question (Dwyer & Cummings, 2001). Specifically, Lazarus and Folkman (1988) found that planful problem solving was related to enhanced affect. This improvement was theorized to be the result of better judgments brought about by more appropriate interactions with the environment.

In a related study, Santiago-Rivera et al. (1995) found that adopting a more challengelike appraisal will potentially bring forth more positive thinking and an increase in goal-directed activity. Further, the results of this research indicated that the extent to which planful problem solving and positive reappraisal are utilized as coping strategies depends on the relationship between cognitive interpretations of stressful events and the importance of achievement to the individual involved.

Arthur (1998) confirmed the findings of Folkman and Lazarus (1988) by showing that negative emotionality has sustained effects on the nature of college students' coping attempts. Specifically, this study found that coping among distressed college students engenders the use of problem-focused coping, more intense emotion-focused coping, as well as avoidant coping strategies that can stymie constructive action.

In examining how the quantity of stress can affect the degree to which coping strategies are utilized, Dwyer and Cummings (2001) established that a direct

relationship exists between the perceived amount of stress and the number of different responses used. Further, this study partially supports the conclusions of Arthur (1998) by ascertaining that a correlation exists between stress and avoidant coping strategies.

Overall, the results from these four empirical studies are supported by previous findings in the literature that link active coping strategies with higher self-confidence, productivity, and positive affect (Holahan & Moos, 1987). Constructive techniques used to address and resolve difficulties have also been shown to be associated with the use of more problem-focused mechanisms (MacNair & Elliott, 1992).

As with the concept of dispositional hope, coping strategies have been shown to be affected by, but distinct from, the psychological constructs of optimism and pessimism. Overall, more optimistic people have been shown to engage in more adaptive, engaged coping behaviors such as active problem-solving and cognitive restructuring. On the other hand, more pessimistic individuals employ more maladaptive coping responses to stress, such as cognitive avoidance and social withdrawal (Long & Sangster, 1993; Scheier & Carver, 1985, 1992).

These results have cultural implications, as noted in a study conducted by Chang (1996), who compared the coping mechanisms used by Asian-American and Caucasian-American college students to deal with stressful life circumstances over a six-week period. The results showed that while no statistical differences exist in positive coping strategies across the two ethnic groups, Asian-American students were found to be more likely to draw upon more pessimistic ways to cope, such as cognitive avoidance and social withdrawal, than were Caucasian-American college students (Chang, 1996).



The way in which an individual copes with a stressful encounter has also been shown to be affected by various intrapersonal characteristics. The traits that have been studied include competitiveness and self-esteem (Franken & Brown, 1996) and the “Big Five” personality factors of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (O’Brien & DeLongis, 1996).

In their examination of the relationship between coping strategies, competitiveness, and self-esteem, Franken and Brown (1996) concluded that individuals with a strong need to win typically have underdeveloped abilities to effectively cope with stress. Instead, these people are more likely to engage in avoidance coping responses (e.g., denial). This study also demonstrated that self-esteem is directly related to the capacity to adaptively cope with tense situations.

In looking at the association between the “Big Five” personality factors and coping, O’Brien and DeLongis (1996) provided support for the supposition that coping responses are jointly determined by disposition and environment (Lazarus, 1990). Further, the specific personality tendencies of neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were found to account for a significant portion of the variance for both approach (i.e., positive reappraisal) and avoidance (i.e., acceptance and cognitive) coping responses. Conversely, logical analysis and seeking guidance and support (both approach coping responses) were not shown to account for a significant portion of variance. Overall, these results suggest that both approach and avoidance coping responses are necessary in any examination of coping.

## *Career Indecision*

*Career Indecision: Basic Concepts.* For the past 75 years, the problem of career indecision has been a major concern for both researchers and counselors (Jurgens, 2000). The construct of career indecision refers to the difficulties people face in deciding on a career (Slaney, 1988). Because career indecision is a common problem for clients who present for career counseling, this construct has become one of the most widely researched within the field of vocational psychology (Betz, 1992; Fouad, 1994; Meier, 1991; Tinsley, 1992). This heightened focus is particularly evident in light of the mounting evidence that career indecision is a complicated and multidimensional construct, as opposed to the linear and dichotomous construct initially conceived by early researchers in this field (Newman, Fuqua, & Seaworth, 1989).

As a result of this increased inquiry, attempts have been made to address the issue of career indecision by delineating more theory-driven vocational concepts. Specifically, the psychodynamic approach to career counseling (Bordin & Kopplin, 1973) emphasizes the importance of internal sources of resistance to decision-making. On the other hand, the developmental approach (e.g., Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996; Super, 1953) likens the difficulties encountered in selecting a career to the regular stages of career development.

The vocational interests approach (e.g., Holland, 1985; Roe, 1956; Salomone, 1982) resembles the developmental approach because it isolates one common stage of the career decision-making process for a more comprehensive examination. This theory posits that an inadequate solidification of interests, a common stage of the career

decision making process, often prevents a hesitant individual from making a final vocational choice (Holland, 1985).

Three approaches to conceptualizing career indecision relevant to the empirical research conducted within the preceding 20 years include the career decidedness status model (Jones & Chenery, 1980), career decision-making self-efficacy (Taylor & Betz, 1983), and the social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). These three conceptualizations are important because of their emphasis on cognitive-person variables, a focus which is mirrored in Snyder's Hope Theory (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991). Because of their significance to the present study, these models of career indecision will be briefly presented here.

The oldest and most widely researched of these models is the career decidedness status model of Jones and Chenery (1980). Within this framework, career decidedness is defined as a continuous variable ranging from a resolution of complete commitment to an occupational choice to total indecision. Further, in attempting to determine how committed people are to an occupational decision, a three-dimensional construct was developed to measure career decidedness that consists of the decidedness, comfort, and reasons dimensions. The decidedness component quantifies the level of commitment, the comfort component refers to the level of dissatisfaction brought about by the lack of a career choice, and the reasons component of this model attempts to provide an explanation as to why an occupational decision has not been made (Jones & Chenery, 1980).

In investigating the reasons segment of this conceptualization more closely, Jones and Chenery (1980) identified four potential justifications for irresolution. These

four rationales are a lack of clarity within the self, a dearth of information pertaining to occupational and/or educational options, general hesitancy, and career choice prominence. Empirical support for this model has subsequently been provided by Jones (1989) and Fuqua and Newman (1989), who verified the association between the comfort and decidedness factors of this framework (Meldahl & Muchinsky, 1997).

Career decision-making self-efficacy has been described as an integral concept to consider when attempting to meet the vocational development needs of both high school and undergraduate college students (Kraus & Hughey, 1999). This construct was defined by Taylor and Betz (1983) as “expectations of self-efficacy with respect to the specific tasks and behaviors required in making career decisions” (pp. 64-65). Based on this conceptualization, career decision-making self-efficacy can be conceived as a problem-specific version of the pathways component of Snyder’s Dispositional Hope theory (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991).

Subsequent research on this initial conceptualization has revealed a negative relationship between career decision-making self-efficacy and career indecision (Bergeron & Romano, 1994; Gillespie & Hillman, 1993; Mathieu, Sowa, & Niles, 1993; Robbins, 1985; Taylor & Betz, 1983; Taylor & Popma, 1990). On the other hand, mixed results as to the influences of career decision-making self-efficacy on the gender of the participants has also been produced, with this variable showing both an effect on this capability (Kraus & Hughey, 1999) and a lack of relationship to this construct (Bergeron & Romano, 1994; Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996; Taylor & Betz, 1983).

More recently, social cognitive career theory has been developed in order to more effectively explain the procedures by which individuals formulate educational and/or vocational interests, arrive at relevant career options, and account for the degree of success that comes from the accomplishment of these objectives (Lent et al., 1994). This theory focuses on personality constructs that allow for independent decision-making as well as the interrelationships between these intrapersonal characteristics and other aspects of the person, their behavior, and their environment (Lent et al., 2002).

In an attempt to provide empirical validation for the social cognitive career theory, Lent et al. (2002) found that a variety of means could be used to cope with impediments to career decision-making. While these authors found that direct problem-focused coping and social support seeking were the mechanisms most commonly utilized, cognitive restructuring and reframing were also called upon as ways to resolve this difficulty (Lent et al., 2002).

#### *The Relationship between Career Indecision and Other Psychological*

*Constructs: Empirical Findings.* Three personality factors thought to influence career indecision are self-efficacy, locus of control, and anxiety (Gaffner & Hazler, 2002). Specifically, both lower self-efficacy (Betz & Vuyten, 1997; Taylor & Betz, 1983) and an external locus of control (Fuqua & Hartman, 1983; Lucas & Epperson, 1990) have been shown to defer the process of career decision-making.

Anxiety has also been demonstrated to have a significant effect on career indecision. This is because a high proportion of undergraduate college students have been found to be trepidatious about deciding on a college major (Hawkins, Bradley, & White, 1977). Further, many college students also lack a clear sense of personal

identity (Holland & Holland, 1977). Given these initial suppositions, it should come as no surprise that ensuing research has consistently linked the predisposition towards trait anxiety to the concept of career indecision (Fuqua, Newman, & Seaworth, 1988; Fuqua, Seaworth, & Newman, 1987; Hawkins, Bradley, & White, 1977; Kimes & Troth, 1974; Lucas, 1993; Newman, Fuqua, & Seaworth, 1989; Peng, 2001).

Specifically, Kimes and Troth (1974) found that an inverse relationship exists between trait anxiety and students' satisfaction with their career decision, with anxiety having a more detrimental impact on career indecision than on the levels of career indecisiveness. In other words, as the students' self-ratings of their level of career indecision moved in the direction of undecided or no decision, their degree of trait anxiety increased, a result used in a subsequent study to substantiate the finding that anxiety can predict general educational-vocational decidedness (Hawkins, Bradley, & White, 1977).

Potentially magnifying this anxiety are findings that suggest that undecided students tend to drop out, earn fewer college credits, and obtain lower grades (Elton & Rose, 1971; Lunneborg, 1975; cited in Holland & Holland, 1977) as well as display difficulties with decision-making in general (Gaffner & Hazler, 2002; Larson & Heppner, 1985; Lucas & Epperson, 1990; Savickas & Jarjoura, 1991). All of these results correspond with conclusions that have linked a higher level of dispositional hope with higher academic achievement and a greater readiness to engage in general problem-solving (Snyder et al., 1991), thereby inferring that career indecision and dispositional hope are negatively related.

A factor analysis conducted by Fuqua, Newman, and Seaworth (1988) further confirmed earlier reports by demonstrating that the primary factor of the Career Decision Scale (CDS; Osipow, Carney, Winer, Yanico, & Koschier, 1976) indicates that anxiety is a significant element within the overarching model of career indecision. Since this component is composed of items that address the lack of information about the self and viable career options, this lack of knowledge can make this process more ambiguous and consequently more fearsome to the typical undecided college student.

The factor analysis conducted by Fuqua et al. (1988) revealed that a concern regarding the goodness-of-fit with a particular career and the presence of discernable impediments to a previous choice would also tend to produce marked levels of anxiety. Moreover, anxiety about potential occupational choices has been linked to certain career-specific, self-defeating personality characteristics such as a poorer vocational identity and a nebulous conceptualization of long-term objectives, interests, and aptitudes (Sweeney & Schill, 1998). In discerning the most effective way to combat negative reactions to career decisions, an ensuing study has demonstrated the effectiveness of group counseling in alleviating the problem of transitory occupational anxiety (Peng, 2001).

Previous research has also found that career indecision is related to both the overall predisposition towards indecisiveness (Cooper, Fuqua, & Hartman, 1984), general neurosis (Meldahl & Muchinsky, 1997), and the “big five” personality characteristics (Lounsbury, Tatum, Chambers, Owens, & Gibson, 1999). Specifically, Cooper et al. (1984) found that individuals who endorse both a high degree of

vocational uncertainty and general irresolution are also likely to manifest more submissiveness, passivity, self-criticism, and cooperativeness.

Over the past decade, two studies of note have attempted to link career indecision to one or more of the “big five” personality traits of neuroticism, extroversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Lounsbury et al., 1999; Meldahl and Muchinsky 1997). Both of these research teams found that career indecision contains a neurotic element, which supports previous empirical research in this area (Chartrand, Rose, Elliott, Marmarosh, & Caldwell, 1993; Meyer & Winer, 1993).

In addition to the finding relating vocational uncertainty to neuroticism, Lounsbury et al. (1999) also found significant positive relationships between a relatively solid career choice and the characteristics of agreeableness and conscientiousness. Given the direct coalition between career decidedness and more adaptive psychological and interpersonal tendencies, it can be safely concluded that a relatively firm career decision is directly related to a higher degree of general life satisfaction (Lounsbury et al., 1999).

#### *Literature Review Summary*

The purpose of this literature review has been to present the relevant conceptual and empirical findings on the psychological constructs of dispositional hope, non-specific coping, and career indecision. In reviewing the conceptual and empirical research pertaining to dispositional hope that predate Snyder’s Dispositional Hope theory, it becomes evident that it was not until the mid-1970’s that the idea that hope affects human endeavors received any substantial validation.



The Hope Scale was the first to associate hope with other potential motivations (e.g., hostility, anxiety). However, it was the Hopelessness Scale, as well as the instrument written to measure dispositional optimism, that were the first to yield empirically defensible information about hope's relations with other psychological constructs. Unfortunately, these early measures and the ensuing research assumed that the cognitive and behavioral manifestations of hope were the same. Therefore, attention was not given to any potential interactions between these two action states, or to how these relationships could influence subsequent functioning.

It was partially an attempt to answer these questions that contributed to the evolution of both Snyder's conceptualization of dispositional hope and the Trait Hope Scale. This conception of hope represented a departure from previous notions of hope in that hope was posited to consist of two necessary but separate components. These two components are agency, or the belief that goals can be achieved, and pathways, or the ability to produce feasible plans to meet objectives.

Subsequent research demonstrated that hope is typically dispositional in nature and that the selection, implementation, and attainment of goals of high- versus low-hope individuals can be predicted. Dispositional hope was also shown to be similar to, albeit distinct from, the individual difference variables of dispositional optimism and self-efficacy.

Overall, dispositional hope was shown to affect many aspects of psychological functioning. Regarding specific differences in behavior, dispositional hope was also shown to be positively associated with acceptance of a traumatic physical injury or a terminal illness, a decrease in substance use in adolescents, and the maintenance of drug

and alcohol sobriety in homeless veterans. The construct of burnout was shown to be negatively related to dispositional hope, as were the emotions of dysphoria, depression, and anxiety. Finally, in examining the ramifications of differences in dispositional hope in the college student population, researchers found that this trait could predict academic and sport achievement, and was negatively related to statistical anxiety.

The construct of non-specific coping has been historically defined as a dynamic means to address pessimistic emotions in such a way that the interpretation of a stressful event is altered. In general, two nebulous types of coping were hypothesized to exist. Problem-focused coping seeks to decrease external tension while the aim of emotion-focused coping strategies is to temper the effects of debilitating emotions such as sadness, anxiety, or anger. In considering to what degree these two types of coping could be applied to a specific problematic situation, research has demonstrated that the coping strategy used is directly related to the perceived result.

Career indecision has come under greater focus during the last two decades because of an increased awareness of its complexity and multidimensionality. As a result of this scrutiny, this area of applied psychology has become increasingly theoretical with models designed to explain the process of vocational decision-making from many different perspectives. Of all the theories that have been proposed to account for career indecision, perhaps the most significant of these paradigms are the career decidedness status model, career decision-making self-efficacy, and the social cognitive career theory. The increased importance of such theories is because of the emphasis each places on the significance of cognitive factors within the individual.

While no study to date has examined the relationship between career indecision and dispositional hope, research has found connections between career indecision and anxiety, self-efficacy, locus of control, general indecisiveness and neurosis, and several of the “big five” personality characteristics. Specifically, self-efficacy, locus of control, and trait anxiety have been found to significantly impact career indecision.

Empirical findings in the area of career indecision have also suggested that an external locus of control, lower self-efficacy, an impaired ability to make decisions, or a neurotic, submissive, or cooperative temperament can affect the occupational decision-making process. In short, results strongly indicate that career indecision is greatly affected by the overall style of decision-making, as well as by personality characteristics inherent in the individual.

### The Present Study

#### *Problem Statement*

The problem addressed by this study will be a description of the relationships among the various components of dispositional hope, career indecision, and the coping responses that could be used to choose a vocation.

#### *Statement of Purpose*

The purpose of the present study is to provide further evidence of the distinct ways by which dispositional hope affects career indecision and coping with vocational choice among undergraduate students. In order to accomplish this objective, the present study will describe the relationships between:

1. Dispositional hope and its specific components of agency and pathways as measured by the Trait Hope Scale (THS; Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991),

academic achievement as measured by high school and undergraduate grade point average (GPA), and career indecision as measured by the Indecision scale of the Career Decision Scale (Osipow, 1980); and

2. Dispositional hope's specific components of agency and pathways as measured by the Trait Hope Scale (THS; Snyder, 1989; Snyder, et al., 1991), and general coping tendencies and the specific elements of approach/avoidance coping responses as measured by the Coping Responses Inventory (Moos, 1992) when the problem requiring attention is career indecision.

### *Significance of the Study*

Snyder et al. (1991) proposed that hope exemplifies the degree to which an individual is willing to engage in activities to achieve a certain goal. Problem solving is usually an integral component of goal-driven efforts (Chang, 1998; Snyder et al., 1991); thus, it can be asserted that the concept of hope is directly related to problem-solving ability. This position was based on the capacity of hope, as measured by the Trait Hope Scale (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991) to account for variance in non-specific problem-focused coping endeavors even after controlling for other significant individual-difference variables, such as affect and dispositional optimism.

In attempting to determine the relationship between hope and more specific aspects of problem-solving ability, Chang (1998) examined the effects of hope, coping, and problem-solving ability on academic and interpersonal functioning in a college student population. Results from this study were mixed and indicated that while a discrepancy exists between high- and low-hope students in their approach and

resolution of stressful academic situations, these two groups are not significantly different in their style of confronting potentially tense interpersonal difficulties.

Given that the process of selecting a vocation involves an appraisal of both academic and interpersonal strengths and weaknesses, the findings from Chang (1998) preclude any reasonable inferences about the relationship between dispositional hope and possible reasons for hesitancy in making an occupational choice. Furthermore, research from Anderson (1988) and Harney (1989) has established a relationship between academic achievement and dispositional hope among undergraduates (Snyder et al., 1991). Given this finding, any correlational research that uses dispositional hope as a predictor variable should also gauge the variance accounted for by academic achievement, since a failure to do so could potentially confound any subsequent results.

Findings from the career indecision literature further cloud this issue as both cognitive and interpersonal coping mechanisms (Betz & Veyten, 1997; Fuqua & Hartman, 1983; Lucas & Epperson, 1990; Taylor & Betz, 1983) and problem-solving abilities (Larson & Heppner, 1985) have been shown to affect career indecision. Given all of these discrepancies, additional research is needed to further clarify the relationship between dispositional hope, career indecision, and the types of coping mechanisms that could be used to choose a vocation.

#### *Research Question*

What are the relationships between dispositional hope, career indecision, and the coping responses used to address career indecision?

#### *Research Hypotheses*

The hypotheses for this study will be:

1. Individuals high in dispositional hope and academic achievement (the predictor variables) are more likely to have made a decision about a career (i.e., dispositional hope and academic achievement have a significant positive effect on career indecision).
2. Individuals high in dispositional hope and academic achievement (the predictor variables) are more likely to have used approach coping responses to resolve their career indecision (i.e., dispositional hope has a significant positive effect on the use of approach coping responses to career indecision).
3. Individuals high in dispositional hope and academic achievement (the predictor variables) are less likely to have used avoidance coping responses to resolve their career indecision (i.e., dispositional hope has a significant negative effect on the use of avoidance coping responses to career indecision).

#### *Definitions of Terms*

Conceptual and operational terms defined for this study will be:

1. *Dispositional Hope* – the perception that something desired may happen through the implementation of goals (Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991). In this study, dispositional hope will be measured as the overall score derived from the Trait Hope Scale (THS; Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991). Specific components of Dispositional Hope are:

- a. *Agency* – the perception that goals can be successfully met by the individual.

In this study, agency will be measured by the Agency subscale of the Trait Hope Scale (THS; Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991).

- b. *Pathways* – the belief that successful plans to meet goals can be generated by the individual. In this study, pathways will be measured by the Pathways subscale of the Trait Hope Scale (THS; Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991).
- 2. *Academic Achievement* – performance in high school and college coursework as measured by self-reported total grade point average (GPA). For this study, GPA will range from 0.00 to 4.00 and will be computed by assigning values to letter grades received in each course (i.e., A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, and F=0). This number is then multiplied by the semester credit hours given for this class. All these products for either high school or college (depending on the GPA to be calculated) are then added together and divided by the total number of credit hours attempted.
- 3. *Career Decision-Making* – a continuum of self-perceptions ranging from completely decided to completely undecided (*Career Indecision*; Jones & Chenery, 1980). For this study, career indecision will be measured by the Indecision scale of the Career Decision Scale (Osipow, 1980).
- 4. *Coping Responses* – the method (i.e., cognitive or behavioral) or focus (i.e., problem-focused or emotion-focused) by which difficulties are addressed and resolved (Moos, 1992). As measured by the Coping Responses Inventory (Moos, 1992) particular ways to cope can be conceptualized as:
  - a. *Approach Coping Responses* – problem-focused solutions to difficulties. As measured by the Coping Responses Inventory (Moos, 1992), approach coping responses are defined as:

1. *Logical Analysis* – cognitive attempts to understand and prepare mentally for a stressor and its consequences.
  2. *Positive Reappraisal* – cognitive attempts to construe and restructure a problem in a positive way while still accepting the reality of the situation.
  3. *Seeking Guidance and Support* – behavioral attempts to seek information, guidance, and support.
  4. *Problem Solving* – behavioral attempts to take action to deal directly with the problem.
- b. *Avoidance Coping Responses* – emotion-focused solutions to difficulties. As measured by the Coping Responses Inventory (Moos, 1992), avoidance coping responses are defined as:
1. *Cognitive Avoidance* – cognitive attempts to avoid thinking realistically about a problem.
  2. *Acceptance or Resignation* – cognitive attempts to react to the problem by accepting it.
  3. *Seeking Alternative Rewards* – behavioral attempts to get involved in substitute activities and create new sources of satisfaction.
  4. *Emotional Discharge* – behavioral attempts to reduce tension by expressing negative feelings (e.g., anger or depression).

### *Limitations*

Potential limitations identified for this study are:



1. The sample involved in this research will be limited to one geographical area. This may decrease the generalizability of both the data and any subsequent findings.
2. Individual-difference variables not addressed in this study, such as age, ethnicity, and the socio-economic status of each participant's family-of-origin, may influence each participant's reported degree of dispositional hope as well as his/her coping responses in addressing the problem of career indecision.

#### *Summary of the Present Study*

Empirical studies have demonstrated that certain cognitive coping responses are related to dispositional hope but that more interpersonal ones are not. On the other hand, both cognitive and interpersonal coping responses appear to influence the process of selecting a vocational option. Because of this existing discrepancy, the association between dispositional hope, career indecision, and the responses used to cope with the problem of vocational choice cannot be inferred with any conviction. Furthermore, a relationship has been demonstrated between dispositional hope and academic achievement among undergraduate students. Given this, research that explores potential connections between dispositional hope and other variables needs to take this established link into account. Therefore, the purpose of the present study will be to address this inconsistency by describing the relationships between dispositional hope, academic achievement, career indecision, and the coping responses used to deal with career indecision in a sample of undergraduate students.

## CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

The present study will be descriptive and correlational in nature. According to Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996), correlational experimental methods are used to describe associations between variables and to predict participants' scores on one variable from their scores on other variables. This type of empirical approach is appropriate for this study as the objective is to depict the relationships between the components of dispositional hope, career indecision, and the coping responses used to make a vocational choice.

### *Population and Sample*

The population for this study will consist of undergraduate students attending a public university in a southwestern state. A convenience sample of students enrolled in Introductory Psychology and upper-division Education courses will be utilized. A power analysis indicates that a minimum of 200 participants will be needed for a medium effect size of .8. Each participant must be at least 18 years of age and proficient in reading and writing English. Participants will receive course credit for taking part in this study.

### *Protection of Human Participants*

Several procedures will be used to ensure that participants' rights are protected. This study will be submitted to the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review and approval. Following approval by the IRB, the researcher will contact the faculty members responsible for recruiting research participants from Introductory Psychology and upper-division Education courses at the

public university in question in order to obtain permission to distribute assessment instruments to undergraduate students enrolled in these classes.

Prior to the distribution of the research instruments, the researcher, or his designee, will give participants a brief description of the study as well as any associated risks and benefits of participating in this study (see Appendix A). All responses will be anonymous and coded so that scores on each instrument can be associated for purposes of data analysis. Confidentiality will be assured both verbally by the researcher or his designee at the beginning of the study and in the informed consent. Each participant will be required to read and sign an informed consent form (see Appendix B) and will be given a copy of this form to keep (see Appendix C).

Once informed consent has been obtained from all individuals willing to participate in this study, each participant will be given the research packet to complete. Data collection will occur in the presence of the researcher or his designee in order to provide participants with the opportunity to have their questions and concerns promptly addressed. Participants will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without loss of research credit already earned.

### *Instruments*

Basic demographic information will be obtained from a questionnaire developed by the researcher (see Appendix D). In addition, three instruments will be used in this study: the Career Decision Scale (CDS; Osipow, 1980; see Appendix E for a copy of this measure), the Coping Responses Inventory (CRI; Moos, 1992; see Appendix F for a copy of this measure), and the Trait Hope Scale (THS; Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991; see Appendix G for a copy of this measure and Appendix H for the author's

permission to use it in this study). Pertinent information related to the format of the instruments and their respective psychometric properties will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

### *The Career Decision Scale*

The Career Decision Scale (CDS) is a 19-item scale designed to measure an individual's current position in the process of deciding on a career (see Appendix E). Respondents rate their choice to each item on a four-point Likert scale with options ranging from 1 (not at all like me) to 4 (exactly like me). Based on the totals for both the Certainty and Indecision scales, decisions can be made regarding the necessity of additional assessments or interventions to address vocational doubt. The CDS yields a numerical estimate of the construct of career indecision as well as potential explanations of its etiology.

*Reliability.* Osipow (1980) reports that two studies were conducted to assess the test-retest reliability of both individual items and Indecision scale scores. First, Osipow, Carney, and Barak (1976) found two retest correlations of .90 and .82 for the Indecision scale for two separate samples of college students. Individual item correlations for both the Certainty and Indecision scales ranged from .34 to .82 with the majority of correlations falling in the .60 to .80 range. In a subsequent study, Slaney, Palko-Nonemaker, and Alexander (1981) measured test-retest correlations over a six-week period for the Certainty and Indecision scale items. This examination produced coefficients ranging from .19 to .70, with the total CDS scores yielding a correlation of .70.

*Construct Validity.* To ascertain construct validity of the CDS, Osipow and Schweikert (1981) correlated CDS scores with scores from other vocational inventories. Specifically, when the CDS was compared with the Assessment of Career Decision Making (ACDM; Buck & Daniels, 1985), a negative correlation was found between the Indecision scale and the ACDM's planfulness scale. The CDS was also found to be significantly related to the Attitude scale of the Career Maturity Inventory (CMI; Crites, 1973) as well as to actually distinguish decided from undecided students (Limburg, 1980).

*Criterion Validity.* Several noteworthy studies have tested the criterion validity of the CDS, though virtually all of these have produced inconsistent findings of the effects of age and gender on CDS scores. Both Niece & Bradley (1979) and Osipow (1978) found that significant differences exist as a function of age while Hartman (1980) and Limburg (1980) did not. Further, studies have found less career indecision in both males (Gordon & Osipow, 1976; Westbrook, Cutts, Madison, & Arcia, 1980) or females (Taylor, 1979), while still other research has found no difference based on gender (Cellini, 1978; Limburg, 1980; Niece & Bradley, 1979; Osipow, Carney, & Barak, 1976; Sutera, 1977).

In summary, research has provided evidence for the reliability and validity of the CDS. The CDS measures both the certainty of an individual's current career choice as well as their present level of indecision. Based on their score, the respondent can be placed in one of three classifications: low (little need for further assessments or intervention), medium (further need for assessments), or high (possible invalid test data

or a high likelihood for intervention). Other advantages of the CDS include its relatively short length and ease of scoring.

### *The Coping Responses Inventory*

The Coping Responses Inventory (CRI) is a 48-item measure constructed to assess the presence of eight different coping responses to stressful life circumstances (Moos, 1992). In essence, this instrument was designed to calculate both the focus of coping (problem- versus emotion-focused) and the method of coping (either cognitive or behavioral). For the purposes of the CRI, the terminology used to describe the focus of coping has been altered to approach coping versus avoidance coping since problem-focused coping calls for a direct advance towards the difficulty in question while emotion-focused coping strategies typically indicate a refusal to actively resolve the problem (Moos, 1992).

The responses to the CRI are measured by eight scales: (1) Logical Analysis, (2) Positive Reappraisal, (3) Seeking Guidance and Support, (4) Problem Solving, (5) Cognitive Avoidance, (6) Acceptance or Resignation, (7) Seeking Alternative Rewards, and (8) Emotional Discharge. Scales one through four measure approach coping tendencies while scales five through eight measure those of avoidance coping. Further, scales one, two, five, and six measure cognitive coping responses while scales three, four, seven, and eight measure behavioral coping mechanisms (Moos, 1992).

The CRI has been constructed in such a way that the respondent selects a recent stressor (in the case of this study, career indecision) and uses a 4-point Likert scale with values ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very often) to rate their reliance on each of the

48 test items. In addition, 10 items assess how the recent stressor has been appraised as well as how this particular stressor will be addressed.

*Reliability and Validity.* Sufficient internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) has been established for the CRI through comparisons of the scores of both men and women on the eight factors with coefficients ranging from .61 to .74 for men and .58 to .71 for women (Moos, 1992). Though the internal consistencies are moderate for both men and women, Moos (1992) explained that this was due to a conscious effort to reduce redundancy and to the probable use of only one or two coping responses within each category. Further analyses revealed that the CRI correlates only modestly with social desirability (mean  $r=.13$ ) for the eight scales. Overall, Moos (1992) concluded that the CRI possesses acceptable psychometric properties.

Subsequent validity studies have provided evidence for the construct, concurrent, and predictive validities of the CRI (Moos, 1992). An abundance of research has examined the differences in coping responses as a function of alcoholism, depression, and major physical illness. Advantages of this measure include its demonstrated ability to satisfactorily measure many of the significant coping responses to external stress as well as its ease in administration and scoring.

#### *Trait Hope Scale*

The Trait Hope Scale (THS) is a 12-item scale (eight hope items, four fillers) constructed to assess the two components of an individual's level of attributional hope. Consistent with Snyder's theory of dispositional hope (Snyder, 1989) the THS was designed to measure both the agency (perceived success in achieving goals) and

pathways (perceived ability to derive the means to accomplish goals; Snyder et al., 1991).

*Reliability and Validity.* Internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) was measured for the THS as well as for the agency and pathways subscales (Snyder et al., 1991). Results from this procedure indicated coefficients in the acceptable range for the total scale (.74 to .84), the agency subscale (.71 to .76), and the pathways subscale (.63 to .80). Test-retest reliabilities using undergraduate students indicated acceptable correlations at the three-week (.85), eight-week (.73), and 10-week (.76 and .82 in two separate studies) intervals.

Validity was supported for the THS in studies that incorporated measures hypothesized to associate moderately with dispositional hope (Gibb, 1990; Holleran & Snyder, 1990). Results from these studies showed that dispositional hope correlates moderately with measures of dispositional optimism (Life Orientation Test; Scheier & Carver, 1985), goal attainment expectancy (Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale; Fibel & Hale, 1978), personal control (Burger-Cooper Life Experiences Survey; Burger & Cooper, 1979), problem-solving ability (Problem Solving Inventory; Heppner & Petersen, 1982), and self-esteem (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; Rosenberg, 1965). Further, the THS was also found to correlate negatively with measures of hopelessness (Beck et al., 1974) and depression (Beck, Ward, Mendelsohn, Mock, & Erbaugh, 1961).

Overall, empirical research has provided evidence for the reliability and validity of the THS. Advantages to using this instrument include brevity and ease of administration and scoring.



### *Data Collection*

Data for this study will be collected in the fall semester of 2003. Permission to distribute the demographic questionnaire and assessment instruments to students enrolled in Introductory Psychology and upper-division Education classes will be obtained from the faculty members responsible for recruiting research participants from these courses. The researcher will schedule times to gather data from these sources.

Prospective participants will be given a brief oral description of the study that will include any associated risks and benefits for participation in this study. Participants will be required to read and sign an informed consent form prior to data collection. These forms will be collected and kept separate from the demographic questionnaires and assessment instruments so that no participant will be identified. Research materials will then be distributed to each participant. The researcher or his designee will answer any questions participants may have, either before or during data collection.

Upon completion of the research packet, each participant will give their responses to the researcher or his designee and then be free to leave the testing area. Upon written request, the researcher will forward a report of the completed study to any participant asking for the general results of this research.

### *Treatment of Data*

Assessment instruments will be hand scored. Factor and total scores of each instrument will be calculated. Demographic data for participants will be analyzed using measures of central tendency. Specifically, the means and standard deviations will be reported for the age, high school grade point average, and college grade point average of the sample. In addition, the total number of higher-hope and lower-hope participants

will also be included in the preliminary section of the results of this study. This information will be included both because of its crucial role in the ensuing statistical analysis and to facilitate an understanding of the limits of the external validity of this research.

Relationships among relevant variables will initially be analyzed using correlations. Linear regression will then be used to explore empirical support for the research hypotheses with dispositional hope as the predictor variable. Next, multiple linear regression will be employed to test the hypothesis with the two predictor variables of dispositional hope and academic achievement. During this procedure, academic achievement will be entered into the analysis first and dispositional hope second in order to gauge how much unique variance is accounted for by dispositional hope.

The level of statistical significance used in all of these procedures will be  $p=.05$ , as this is the level accepted in social sciences research. When linear regression is used, a sample size sufficiently large to support data analysis is needed to decrease the risk of Type II errors and avoid analysis that yields unstable and meaningless data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). As a result, at least 200 participants will be recruited to take part in this study. To facilitate rapid and more thorough understanding of the results of this study, data will be presented as tables and graphs when appropriate.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Oral Description of Study**

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA  
ORAL DESCRIPTION OF STUDY

Title of Project: The Effects of Dispositional Hope on Coping with Career Indecision in a Sample of Undergraduate Students

Oral Description of Study:

My name is John Hurley. I am currently working on my doctorate in counseling psychology at the University of Oklahoma. As part of the requirements to obtain this degree, I am conducting a study about the effects of dispositional (or trait) hope on coping with the selection of a career among undergraduate students. I would greatly appreciate your participation in my study today by completing a series of research measures. This will require about one hour of your time.

All instruments are numbered so that each can be compared with the other instruments completed by the same student. No personally identifying information will be placed on anything you complete. So that you can be assured of total anonymity, **DO NOT** write either your name or your student I.D. number on anything you fill out connected with this study. Data will be stored in my office for three years and then will be destroyed by shredding.

Your participation in this project is strictly voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may withdraw at any time without penalty as well. If you are participating in this study to obtain course credit or extra credit points, then you may not receive this credit if you decide not to continue. However, you will not be penalized any credit for withdrawing from the study. Should you complete the materials, you will receive course credit for your participation in this endeavor.

Please read, sign, and hand in the informed consent before you begin completing the research measures. You will also be given a consent form (minus your signature) that you may keep. Please read and carefully answer all questions in this series. If you come across any questions that you do not understand, please raise your hand and an experimenter will come to you. If you come across any questions you feel are offensive or an unwarranted invasion of your privacy, you may skip them. Make sure that, if you do skip an item, you leave the corresponding space on the answer sheet blank. Please read all directions carefully.

Before we begin, do you have any questions? (*pause for questions*) You may also ask me any questions you may have while completing the research packet.

**APPENDIX C**  
**Informed Consent Form**  
**to be Returned to the Researcher**

**Informed Consent Form for Research Being Conducted  
Under the Auspices of the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus**

This document is an informed consent form to participate in a research project titled *The Effects of Dispositional Hope on Coping with Career Indecision in a Sample of Undergraduate Students*. This project is being conducted by John C. Hurley of the University of Oklahoma. This project will serve as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Ph.D. in counseling psychology.

**If you decide to participate in this project, you will be asked to complete a series of research measures designed to measure dispositional hope, career indecision, the coping responses that you have used in selecting a vocational option, and individual differences in decision-making style. It will take approximately one hour to complete these instruments.**

I see no foreseeable risks of participation in this project for you. Your participation may help both researchers and mental health professionals in formulating and implementing more effective career counseling interventions. You may also gain insight into your own level of dispositional hope, career development, and ability to cope with making more satisfying occupational choices through your participation in this study.

Your participation in this project is strictly voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may withdraw at any time without penalty as well. If you are participating in this study to obtain course credit or extra credit points, then you may not receive this credit if you decide not to continue. However, you will not be penalized any credit for withdrawing from the study. Should you complete the materials, you will receive course credit for your participation in this endeavor.

You must be 18 years of age or older to participate. All information from this project, including all of your responses to the questions asked in connection with this project, will be kept confidential and your actual identity will be protected at all times. Further, information gathered for this project will be kept in a secure location and will be destroyed three years after the conclusion of the investigation.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact me at (405) 573-9963, or my university supervisor, Dr. Cal Stoltenberg, at (405) 325-5974. **If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please call the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board at (405) 325-8110.**

John Hurley, M.A.  
Doctoral Student, Counseling Psychology Program  
Department of Educational Psychology

**CONSENT STATEMENT**

I hereby agree to participate in the above-described research. I understand my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Please check one blank below and sign your name on the line provided.

\_\_\_\_\_ YES, I agree to participate in this project.

\_\_\_\_\_ NO, I do not want to answer any of the questions.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Researcher Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Informed Consent Form**

**to be Kept by the Participant**

Informed Consent Form for Research Being Conducted  
Under the Auspices of the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus

This document is an informed consent form to participate in a research project titled *The Effects of Dispositional Hope on Coping with Career Indecision in a Sample of Undergraduate Students*. This project is being conducted by John C. Hurley of the University of Oklahoma. This project will serve as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Ph.D. in counseling psychology.

**If you decide to participate in this project, you will be asked to complete a series of research measures designed to measure dispositional hope, career indecision, the coping responses that you have used in selecting a vocational option, and individual differences in decision-making style. It will take approximately one hour to complete these instruments.**

I see no foreseeable risks of participation in this project for you. Your participation may help both researchers and mental health professionals in formulating and implementing more effective career counseling interventions. You may also gain insight into your own level of dispositional hope, career development, and ability to cope with making more satisfying occupational choices through your participation in this study.

Your participation in this project is strictly voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may withdraw at any time without penalty as well. If you are participating in this study to obtain course credit or extra credit points, then you may not receive this credit if you decide not to continue. However, you will not be penalized any credit for withdrawing from the study. Should you complete the materials, you will receive course credit for your participation in this endeavor.

You must be 18 years of age or older to participate. All information from this project, including all of your responses to the questions asked in connection with this project, will be kept confidential and your actual identity will be protected at all times. Further, information gathered for this project will be kept in a secure location and will be destroyed three years after the conclusion of the investigation.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact me at (405) 573-9963, or my university supervisor, Dr. Cal Stoltenberg, at (405) 325-5974. **If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please call the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board at (405) 325-8110.**

John Hurley, M.A.  
Doctoral Student, Counseling Psychology Program  
Department of Educational Psychology



## **APPENDIX E**

### **Demographic Questionnaire**

Thanks again for participating in this study. Please read the directions carefully and respond to all of the items in this series. If you come across any questions that you do not understand, please raise your hand and the researcher will come to you. If you come across any questions that you feel are offensive, or an unwarranted invasion of your privacy, you may skip them. Make sure that, if you do skip them, that you leave the corresponding space on the answer sheet blank.

*Please do not write on any of the test materials. Place all of your responses on the scantron answer sheet provided to you for this purpose. Remember that all of your answers will be kept confidential!*

Please answer the following questions:

1. Your Gender: (select one) (0) Female (1) Male
2. Your Age: (select one) (0) 18 years (4) 22 years  
 (1) 19 years (5) 23-25 years  
 (2) 20 years (6) 26-28 years  
 (3) 21 years (7) I am older than 28 years
3. Your Ethnicity: (select one) (0) African/African-American  
 (1) Asian/Asian-American  
 (2) Caucasian  
 (3) Latino  
 (4) Native American  
 (5) Other
4. Your Classification: (select one) (0) Freshman  
 (1) Sophomore  
 (2) Junior  
 (3) Senior  
 (4) Unclassified Student
5. Your Cumulative College Grade Point Average (GPA): (select one)  
 (0) 1.99 or below (5) 3.0 to 3.24  
 (1) 2.0 to 2.24 (6) 3.25 to 3.49  
 (2) 2.25 to 2.49 (7) 3.50 to 3.74  
 (3) 2.5 to 2.74 (8) 3.75 to 3.99  
 (4) 2.75 to 2.99 (9) 4.00

6. **Your Cumulative High School Grade Point Average (GPA):** *(select one)*

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| (0) 1.99 or below | (5) 3.0 to 3.24  |
| (1) 2.0 to 2.24   | (6) 3.25 to 3.49 |
| (2) 2.25 to 2.49  | (7) 3.50 to 3.74 |
| (3) 2.5 to 2.74   | (8) 3.75 to 3.99 |
| (4) 2.75 to 2.99  | (9) 4.00         |

7. **As of today, have you decided on a college major?**

(0) Yes
(1) No

8. **How satisfied are you with this decision?**

(0) Very unsatisfied
(1) Somewhat unsatisfied
(2) Neutral
(3) Somewhat satisfied
(4) Very satisfied

9. **How confident are you with this decision?**

(0) Not at all
(1) Somewhat not
(2) Neutral
(3) Somewhat confident
(4) Very confident

10. **How comfortable are you with this decision?**

(0) Not at all
(1) Somewhat not
(2) Neutral
(3) Somewhat
(4) Very

11. **As of today, have you decided on a career?**

(0) Yes
(1) No

12. **How satisfied are you with this decision?**

(0) Very unsatisfied
(1) Somewhat unsatisfied
(2) Neutral
(3) Somewhat satisfied
(4) Very satisfied

13. **How confident are you with this decision?**

(0) Not at all
(1) Somewhat not
(2) Neutral

- (3) Somewhat confident
- (4) Very confident

14. How comfortable are you with this decision?

- (0) Not at all
- (1) Somewhat not
- (2) Neutral
- (3) Somewhat
- (4) Very

# NOTE TO USERS

Copyrighted materials in this document have not been scanned at the request of the author. They are available for consultation in the author's university library.

145-153

This reproduction is the best copy available.

**UMI<sup>®</sup>**

**APPENDIX H**  
**Trait Hope Scale**

### **The Hope Scale**

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

**1=Definitely False**

**2=Mostly False**

**3=Mostly True**

**4=Definitely True**

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

## **APPENDIX I**

### **Permission to Use Trait Hope Scale**



: Re: Permission to use Trait Hope Scale in Dissertation Study  
: 12/13/02 9:54:10 AM Central Standard Time  
: crsnyder@ku.edu (C. R. Snyder)  
: PSYCHPhDJH@aol.com

Mr. Dr. Snyder,

My name is John Hurley, and I am a fourth-year counseling psychology doctoral student at the University of Oklahoma. I am currently in the process of writing my dissertation proposal under the supervision of Dr. Cal Stoltzberg. I would like your permission to use the Trait Hope Scale in my study. My study is an examination of the effects of dispositional hope on coping with peer indecision in an undergraduate college sample, and is similar to the research of Chang (1998) in his examination of the effects of hope, coping, problem-solving ability on college students' academic and interpersonal functioning.

Previously, I have never had to solicit permission from the author of an assessment instrument before, so I am unsure about how much information you require to make this decision. I can e-mail you the 7-page introduction to dissertation proposal that delineates the problem statement, research questions, and study hypotheses if you like. Please e-mail me at your convenience with your permission or a request for additional information.

Thank you for your assistance in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

John Hurley

John,

You do not need to ask permission. Feel free to use that or any of my scales. Good luck to you.

Best wishes,

C. R. Snyder  
Professor of Psychology  
Distinguished Professor of Clinical Psychology  
Department of Psychology, 1415 Jayhawk Blvd., 340 Fraser Hall  
University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas 66045  
Home telephone: (785) 864-4121  
Telephone to office: (785) 864-9855  
(785) 864-5895 Electronic mail: crsnyder@ku.edu  
Website for hope research: <http://www.ku.edu/~crsnyder/>

**Appendix J**  
**Debriefing Statement**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of dispositional (or trait) hope on coping with career indecision, as well as individual differences in decision-making style. This investigation will ideally assist researchers and mental health professionals in formulating and implementing more effective career counseling interventions. If you have any questions about this research project, or would care to learn more about the general results of this study, please feel free to contact the Principal Investigator: John Hurley, M.A. at (405) 573-9963 or [psychphdjh@aol.com](mailto:psychphdjh@aol.com). You may also call the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board at 325-8110 if you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant. If you have any questions at this time, please feel free to ask the experimenter present today.

Thank you very much for your participation.

John Hurley, M.A.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of dispositional (or trait) hope on coping with career indecision, as well as individual differences in decision-making style. This investigation will ideally assist researchers and mental health professionals in formulating and implementing more effective career counseling interventions. If you have any questions about this research project, or would care to learn more about the general results of this study, please feel free to contact the Principal Investigator: John Hurley, M.A. at (405) 573-9963 or [psychphdjh@aol.com](mailto:psychphdjh@aol.com). You may also call the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board at 325-8110 if you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant. If you have any questions at this time, please feel free to ask the experimenter present today.

Thank you very much for your participation.

John Hurley, M.A.

## **Appendix K**

### **IRB Approval**



*The University of Oklahoma*

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT PROTECTION

November 25, 2003

Mr. John Hurley  
750 Ridegcrest, Apt. 1528  
Norman, OK 73072

Dear Mr. Hurley:

Your research application, "The Effects of Dispositional Hope on Coping with Career Indecision in a Sample of Undergraduate Students," has been reviewed according to the policies of the Institutional Review Board chaired by Dr. E. Laurette Taylor, and found to be exempt from the requirements for full board review. Your project is approved under the regulations of the University of Oklahoma - Norman Campus Policies and Procedures for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research Activities.

Should you wish to deviate from the described protocol, you must notify this office, in writing, noting any changes or revisions in the protocol and/or informed consent document, and obtain prior approval. Changes may include but are not limited to adding data collection sites, adding or removing investigators, revising the research protocol, and changing the subject selection criteria. A copy of the approved informed consent document(s) is attached for your use.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at 325-8110 or [irb@ou.edu](mailto:irb@ou.edu).

Sincerely,

Steven O'Geary, Ph.D.  
Director, Human Research Participant Protection  
Administrative Officer  
Institutional Review Board - Norman Campus (FWA #00003191)

JSO  
FY2004-130

cc: Dr. E. Laurette Taylor, Chair, Institutional Review Board  
Nicole Judice Campbell, Psychology  
Dr. Cal Stoltzberg, Educational Psychology