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Hopeful Measures: Characteristics of Hope at a Community College

Abstract

Snyder's Hope Theory defines the construct of hope as the "sum of perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes" (Snyder, 2000, p. 8). Hope is a tenant of positive psychology that can be used to measure personal as well as academic potential (Seligman, 2002). In fact, Lopez (2009) claims that "hope predicts GPA and retention in college, and hope scores are more robust than high school GPA, SAT, and ACT scores." Researchers have measured the relationship between hope and academic performance in college students at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions and found that more hopeful college students tend to perform better academically than those students that are less hopeful (Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002; Gallagher & Lopez, 2008; Bressler, Bressler, & Bressler, 2010; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010). Little is known about the relationship between hope and academic performance as it pertains to the large number of students who attend community colleges, and the researcher used a quantitative design to answer the following research questions: 1. What is the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students during their first semester of study as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991)? 2. What are the demographic characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of demonstrated hope?

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Hopeful Measures: Characteristics of Hope at a Community College

By

Thomas C. Priester

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of the requirements for the degree

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Supervised by

Dr. Mary S. Collins

Committee Member

Dr. Gerard Rooney

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education

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Dedication

Snyder's Hope Theory defines the construct of hope as the "sum of perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes" (Snyder, 2000, p. 8). I am sincerely grateful to those who continually motivated me to persist along the pathway to my goal of **Becoming A Doctor (B.A.D.)**. The B.A.D. process began on Friday, May 14, 2010. Thirty-one months, two career advancements, one relocation, a few hurdles and subsequent recalculations, numerous large and small celebrations, and 130 pages later...the mission is complete, and my B.A.D. goal has been met.

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Biographical Sketch

Thomas C. Priester is currently the Instructor of Transitional Studies at Genesee Community College in Batavia, NY. Mr. Priester graduated from SUNY Fredonia in 2001 with a Bachelor of Art degree in Secondary English Education. He attended Buffalo State College from 2001 to 2003 and graduated with a Master of Science degree in Student Personnel Administration in 2003. He came to St. John Fisher College in the summer of 2010 and began doctoral studies in the Doctor of Education program in Executive Leadership. Mr. Priester pursued his research on hope in community college students under the director of Dr. Mary Collins and Dr. Gerard Rooney and received the Ed.D. degree in 2012.

Abstract

Snyder's Hope Theory defines the construct of hope as the "sum of perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes" (Snyder, 2000, p. 8). Hope is a tenant of positive psychology that can be used to measure personal as well as academic potential (Seligman, 2002). In fact, Lopez (2009) claims that "hope predicts GPA and retention in college, and hope scores are more robust than high school GPA, SAT, and ACT scores."

Researchers have measured the relationship between hope and academic performance in college students at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions and found that more hopeful college students tend to perform better academically than those students that are less hopeful (Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002; Gallagher & Lopez, 2008; Bressler, Bressler, & Bressler, 2010; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010). Little is known about the relationship between hope and academic performance as it pertains to the large number of students who attend community colleges, and the researcher used a quantitative design to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students during their first semester of study as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991)?
2. What are the demographic characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of demonstrated hope?

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In his *Essay on Man*, eighteenth-century poet, Alexander Pope professes the following about the construct of hope: “Hope springs eternal in the human breast; Man never Is, but To be blest. The soul uneasy, and confin’d from home, Rests and expatiates in a life to come” (Nuttall, 1984). Meaning that it is human nature for individuals to unconditionally maintain positive expectations for what the future may hold, this historic quote ignites rich discussion central to the role hope plays in human motivation. It is the interpretation of this researcher that the construct of hope, in the context of Pope’s quote, exists in human beings as a driving force behind one’s motivation towards a future psychological destination.

Forecasting what the future may hold involves a certain level of hope. Whether it is hope for success in love, for continued health, or for a profitable career, a calculated risk exists in the pursuit of obtaining the outcome that is desired. It is the possibility that the desired outcome may not actually be obtained that fuels the construct of hope. Hope exists as a powerful feeling that drives an individual toward a desired outcome. While the construct of hope has been proven to contribute to the successful attainment of desired outcomes for adults, such as marital satisfaction (Bailey & Snyder, 2007), life satisfaction (Chang, 1998; Gallagher & Lopez, 2009), and work performance (Peterson & Bryon, 2008), the construct of hope is an especially compelling contributor to the successful attainment of desired outcomes for youth (Snyder, 1995; Barnum, Snyder, Rapoff, Mani, & Thompson, 1998; Gilman, Dooley, & Florell, 2006; Marques, Pais, & Lopez, 2009;

Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010) and academic performance in college students (Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002; Gallagher & Lopez, 2008; Bressler, Bressler, & Bressler, 2010; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010).

Hope and Academic Performance

Hope is a tenant of positive psychology that can be used to measure personal as well as academic potential (Seligman, 2002). Much of the existing research literature on hope in students relative to academic performance contains studies focused on students in middle schools and high schools. Additionally, the research literature includes an array of studies that target hope relative to academic performance in undergraduate college students at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions. Studies have measured the relationship between hope and academic performance in college students at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions and found that more hopeful college students tend to perform better academically than those students that are less hopeful (Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002; Gallagher & Lopez, 2008; Bressler, Bressler, & Bressler, 2010; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010). While the relationship between hope and academic performance has been studied in students at various levels of education, as previously noted, little is known about the relationship between hope and academic performance as it pertains to the large number of students who attend community colleges.

Characteristics of Community College Students

Provasnik and Planty (2008) note that approximately 33% of all American college

students are enrolled at community colleges. The student population that attends community colleges in America is unique because, compared to students who attend four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions, more non-traditionally aged students tend to enroll in coursework at community colleges. Additionally, the average age of students at the community college is 28. Also, a large number, 42%, of students at community colleges are first-generation college students which means they come from families where neither parents nor guardians earned a baccalaureate degree. Students at community colleges are likely to have family (16% are single parents) and work obligations, and as a result nearly 60% are enrolled in part-time course work (NCES, 2009).

Because of an open-access mission, community colleges tend to admit a large number of academically underprepared students who are required to enroll in developmental or remedial education courses and programs (McCabe, 2000). Over 50% of the students admitted to community colleges are considered academically underprepared as a result of placement test scores in core academic disciplines such as reading, writing, and mathematics, and are required to enroll in developmental or remedial education courses and programs when they enter the community college (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). Just over 30% of the students that enroll in developmental or remedial education courses and programs obtain a degree or certificate within six years at community colleges (Radford, Berkner, Wheelless, & Shepherd, 2010).

While studies have been conducted on the relationship between hope and academic performance for students in middle school through college, this study will focused on hope as it pertains to community college students.

Problem Statement

Little is known about hope in community college students. This is a problem because the premise of hope characterizes an individual's ability to persist toward a goal when hurdles pose setbacks. Some of the factors that have the potential to serve as hurdles along the pathway to academic success for community colleges students include being of non-traditional age, having first-generation student status, having family obligations, having work obligations, having part-time enrollment status, and being academically underprepared.

Research Context

This study took place at a mid-sized, community college in New York State. The institution is a part of the State University of New York which includes 64 institutions of higher education, 30 of which are community colleges. The institution is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission, and the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships. The institution receives funding primarily from three sources, the State University of New York, the county of the State in which the main campus is housed, and student tuition. Funding is also generated through public and private donors.

Geography. The institution is located in Central New York. According to the institution's fact book, the main campus spans across more than 250 acres and is located 45 minutes from Rochester, NY in a region popular for its wineries. The main campus is unique because it includes the community's public access television station, outdoor classrooms, nature trails, a simulated nursing hospital station, a therapeutic massage lab,

a greenhouse, and an arboretum. In addition to the main campus, the institution also has three campus centers within a 30 mile radius of the main campus which serve the educational needs of their respective surrounding communities.

Academics. The community college at which the research took place offers programs that lead to completion of Associate of Science, Associate of Art, and Associate of Applied Science degrees as well as a plethora of one-year certificates. According to the institution's fact book, more than 55% of students graduate with Associate of Science or Associate of Art transfer degrees which prepare them for further study at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions. Other students graduate with Associate of Applied Science degrees or certificates which prepare them to obtain employment in their field of study.

According to the institution's fact book, more than forty academic degree and certificate programs, honors studies, a Winter Session and Minimesters, online and hybrid courses, travel and expedition courses, internships, high school dual-credit programs, non-credit and workforce training offerings, and Adult Basic Education/GED programs are offered by the institution. The institution also holds Joint Admissions Agreements and Transfer Agreements with public and private four-year, baccalaureate degree granting colleges and universities that allow graduates to transfer their credits in pursuit of Bachelor degrees, receiving full junior status.

Enrollment demographics. According to the institution's Fall 2011 Enrollment Report, in the fall of 2011, 6,811 full-time and part-time students attended classes at all four campus centers and online, with full-time and part-time enrollment totaling 3,819 and 2,992, respectively. Nearly 77% of the full-time students enrolled at the community

college in the fall of 2011 were age 24 and younger, and the average age of full-time students was approximately 23 years old. Approximately 65% of the part-time students enrolled at the community college in the fall of 2011 were age 24 and younger, and the average age of part-time students was approximately 24 years old. Females outnumber the males in the enrollment figures for both full-time and part-time students at 50.2% and 61.9% respectively. The programs of study with the highest enrollment include business administration, criminal justice, and human services. As the direct result of placement testing, a significant number of students were placed into developmental education courses in reading, writing, and mathematics in the fall of 2011 at approximately 51%, approximately 55%, and approximately 67% respectively.

Retention. According to the institution's retention reports, as generated by the Office of Institutional Research, the retention rate of full-time students from fall semester to fall semester has decreased steadily since 2009 and has since fallen below the national average as reported in the ACT Institutional Data File. An institution's retention rate is defined as the percentage of students that begin a program of study during a certain fall semester and return to the institution to continue a program of study during the following fall semester after completing a full academic year of study (fall semester, which begins in August, to spring semester, which ends in May) at the institution. The fall 2008 to fall 2009 retention rate at the institution was 59.7% which was well above the national average of 53.7% (ACT, 2009). The fall 2009 to fall 2010 retention rate at the institution was 55.3% which fell below the national average of 55.7 % (ACT, 2010). The fall 2010 to fall 2011 retention rate at the institution was 53.8% which fell even further below the national average of 55.3% (ACT, 2011).

Theoretical Rationale

Seligman (2002) purports that hope is a tenant of positive psychology that can measure personal as well as academic potential, and prior research has shown that hope is linked to academic performance in students at middle schools, high schools, and at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions (Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002; Gallagher & Lopez, 2008; Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, & Lopez, 2011). In fact, Lopez (2009) claims that “hope predicts GPA and retention in college, and hope scores are more robust than high school GPA, SAT, and ACT scores.”

To develop a clearer understanding of hope in community college students, the researcher intended to examine the hope of first-time, first-year students at a community college during their first semester of study. The study was framed by Snyder’s Hope Theory which defines the construct of hope as the “sum of perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes” (Snyder, 2000, p. 8).

Mythological Origin of Hope

The story of Pandora creates a foundation on which the concept of hope has emerged. The mythological tale of hope began when fire was stolen from the gods by Prometheus which, in turn, upset Zeus. Revenge was taken when the gods sent Pandora to earth with a jar that she was instructed not to open. Disobeying the given instructions, temptation took over, and Pandora opened the jar letting all disenchanting elements (including gout, rheumatism, colic, spite, envy, and revenge) out of the jar to infest humans on earth while hope was recaptured quickly in the jar when she refastened the lid (Elliott, 2011).

According to mythology, hope was originally associated with now negative physical and psychological elements having lived in Pandora's jar with gout, rheumatism, colic, spite, envy, and revenge. Yet the idea that hope was preserved in Pandora's jar leads to a curious evolution over the course of time. Dating back to the late 1950s, studies on hope emerged into the psychology literature relative to healing based on positive expectations for goal attainment (Menninger, 1959; Stotland, 1969). Since then, the predictive measure of hope in relation to performance (academic and athletic), adjustment (developmental and psychological), and health (outcomes and prevention) has framed a variety of studies in the fields of healthcare and in education, in addition to psychology (Snyder 2000, 2002; Snyder, Feldman, Taylor, Schroeder, & Adams, 2000; & Snyder, McDermott, Cook, & Rapoff, 2002).

Evolution of Hope Theory

Clinical psychologist and professor, C. R. Snyder built his career at the University of Kansas around the topic of human motivation. A culmination of Snyder's research, which focused specifically on the *excuses* that individuals give when they make a mistake or perform poorly, launched his focus on the study of hope and the subsequent development of his Hope Theory. Snyder's qualitative work on *excuses* identified consistent evidence that an intentional distance exists between an individual's excuse and a negative outcome. Because of this evidence, Snyder considered the potential gap that existed in the distance between an individual and a positive outcome. His research evolved to examine the other side of making *excuses*, and Snyder began to explore the goal attainment of individuals.

Consistent in his data collection on the attainment of goals were two emergent

themes. The first theme was the question of whether or not a logical route existed in attaining a desired goal, which Snyder identified as *pathways thought*. The second theme that emerged was the willingness to pursue the route toward a desired goal, which Snyder identified as *agency thought*. The two themes that emerged from Snyder's research (pathways and agency) were found to work simultaneously as pieces of the positive expectations (or hope) for goal attainment. With this, Snyder's Hope Theory emerged as a comprehensive model of thinking which is illustrated by the researcher in Figure 1.1 (Snyder, 2000, pp. 5-8).

Snyder's Hope Theory Model

Snyder defines hope as the “sum of perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes” (Snyder, 2000, p. 8). The three core elements of Snyder's Hope Theory include the conceptualization of a goal, the developed routes to obtain the conceptualized goal (pathways), and the motivation to obtain the conceptualized goal (agency). Hope is “cognitive phenomena that is the summative result of pathways thought plus agency thought” (Snyder, 2000, p. 10; Snyder & Lopez, 2006, pp. 188-192). See Figure 1.1 for the researcher's rendition of Snyder's Hope Theory Model.

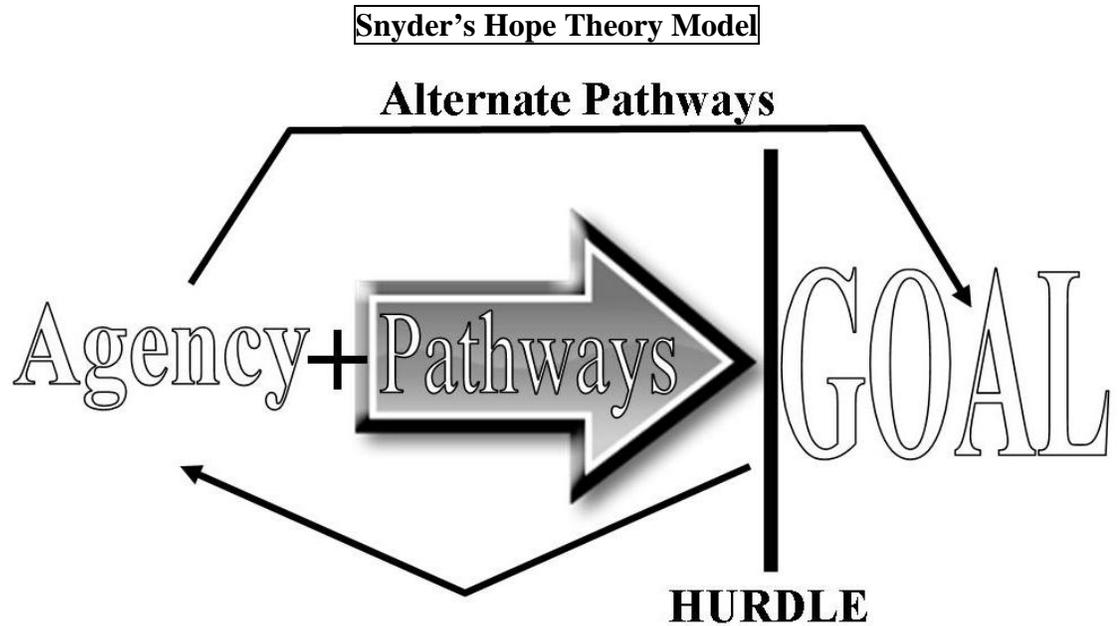


Figure 1.1. Snyder's Hope Theory Model as illustrated by the researcher.

Goals. As the anchor of Snyder's Hope Theory, a goal provides a desired outcome to work toward. A conceptualized goal includes an element of uncertainty and is the result of a series of actions and behaviors that have substantial value linked to them. Regardless of the size of the goal (for the purpose of this study a small goal can be defined as walking across the street and a large goal can be defined as saving enough money to put a down payment on a new house), an attainable goal determines a conceivable endpoint for which to strive (Snyder, 1994; Snyder, Cheavens, & Simpson, 1997). Figure 1.1 shows the placement of the goal as the intended outcome in Snyder's Hope Theory Model.

Pathways. Pathways thought outlines the route toward the conceptualized goal. "Pathways thinking taps the perceived ability to produce plausible routes to goals" (Snyder, 2000, p. 9). Pathways thought is also referred to as *waypower* (Snyder, 1994, p. 8). High-level pathways thinkers believe that they are able to establish an effective method to achieving a goal and can resiliently redirect their path should unexpected

occurrences (hurdles) take place. Conversely, low-level pathways thinkers find it more challenging to recalculate their path to the goal when an unexpected occurrence (hurdle) takes place. Figure 1.1 illustrates the placement of pathways thought in relation to goals in Snyder's Hope Theory Model.

Agency. Agency thought is described as the driving force, or motivation, that propels an individual along the pathway toward a desired goal (Snyder, 2000, p. 10). Agency thought is also referred to as *willpower* (Snyder, 1994, p. 6). Agency thought represents the negotiated value of the motivation to move along a route toward the desired goal. For high-level agency thinkers, when an unexpected occurrence (hurdle) takes place, agency thought sustains positive reassurance to attain the desired goal. Low-level agency thinkers face more challenges when unexpected occurrences (hurdles) take place and may lose the motivation to attain the desired goal. Figure 1.1 illustrates the placement of agency in relation to pathways and goals in Snyder's Hope Theory Model.

Hurdle and alternate pathways. As previously mentioned, hope is defined as the “sum of perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes” (Snyder, 2000, p. 8). Figure 1.1 includes the plus sign to signify the summative relationship between agency and pathways in Snyder's Hope Theory Model. Agency thoughts and pathways thoughts continue to iterate along the journey to attain the desired goal (Snyder, 2000, p. 10). The mutually supportive relationship between agency thinking and pathways thinking is the basis of hope.

Hope does not exist without either element of pathways thinking or agency thinking. As mentioned previously, while agency thinking fosters an individual's motivation to achieve a desired goal, multiple alternate pathways may be available to

attain the desired goal. Therefore, when a hurdle (for the purpose of this study regarding students in an educational setting, an example of a hurdle could be receiving a failing grade on an exam) causes a blockage on the original pathway to the desired goal, alternate pathways to the desired goal need to be explored. High-level hope thinkers are able to identify alternate pathways to channel their motivation toward the desired goal whereas low-level hope thinkers might give up on the desired goal. Figure 1.1 illustrates the placement of a hurdle in Snyder's Hope Theory Model (between the original pathway and the goal) which causes an individual to reexamine their agency and identify an alternate pathway to the desired goal (represented by the clockwise arrows).

Hope Theory Analogy

The construct of hope exists in humans as the driving force behind one's motivation towards a future psychological destination. For the purpose of this study, the researcher analogizes Snyder's Hope Theory with the operation of an automobile. An automobile (hope) serves as a means to travel from a starting location (conceptualization of a desired goal) to a final location (attainment of a desired goal). Gasoline (agency) is necessary to operate the automobile to move from one location to another location. Locations are connected by roadways (pathways). An automobile (hope) needs both gasoline (agency) and roadways (pathways) to move from location to location, and it is the combination of the gasoline and roadways that makes the automobile useful. Without roadways, the automobile has nowhere to go. Without gasoline, the automobile would not be able to move along the roadways.

A number of possible hurdles exist as an automobile moves from a starting location to a final location. If a roadway is closed due to an accident along a

predetermined route from location to location, alternative roadways (alternate pathways) will be necessary to explore. The exploration of alternative roadways may require more gasoline (agency) to be used because the driver may need to drive around to find an alternative roadway. The more the alternative roadways (alternate pathways) are explored the more gasoline (agency) will be needed. Together, the number of alternative roadways (alternate pathways) and the level of gasoline (agency) in the gas tank determine the automobile's progress along the route from a starting location (conceptualization of desired goal) to a final location (attainment of a desired goal). In short, hope transports you to where you want to go, but you may need to reassess your agency (fill the gasoline tank) and your pathways (explore alternative roadways) should a hurdle block you from the desired goal (final location).

Measuring Hope

To measure hope, Snyder and his colleagues developed the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). Translated into a number of languages, including Arabic, Chinese, and Portuguese, and used to measure hope in research studies world-wide for over twenty years, Snyder's Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) has been validated in the literature. The Hope Scale correlates positively with such instruments as the Life Orientation Test (Scheier & Craver, 1985) and the General Expectancy for Success Scale (Fibell & Hale, 1978), which both assess optimism, and the Problem Solving Inventory (Hepper & Petersen, 1982) which assesses problem solving skills. Conversely, the Hope Scale correlates negatively with such instruments as the Beck Hopelessness Scale (Beck, Weissman, Lester, & Trexler, 1974) and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) which both measure constructs that are opposite of

hope (Snyder et al., 2002).

For the purpose of this study, the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991; Appendix A) was used to measure the hope level of participants. The twelve question, 8-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1-definitely false to 8-definitely true) survey includes four questions that measure agency (questions 2, 9, 10, and 12), four questions that measure pathways (1, 4, 6, and 8), and four filler questions (questions 3, 5, 7, and 11). The scale identifies separate yet related agency and pathways results as well as an overall hope level. The researcher was able to identify the hope level for each participant in the study. The Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) was left by Dr. Snyder in the public domain as confirmed in an electronic mail message (in Appendix B) by Dr. Shane Lopez from the Gallup Organization.

The hope level of each participant could range from 8 to 64 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), with 8 being the lowest possible score and 64 being the highest possible score. For this study, participants that scored between 46 and 64 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) were identified as having a high hope level. Participants that scored between 27 and 45 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) were identified as having a medium hope level. Participants that scored between 8 and 26 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) were identified as having a low hope level.

The fact that the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) has been actively used by researchers in studies on human behavior for over two decades provides credibility for its use in this study. Snyder et al. (2000) reports that the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) had satisfactory internal consistency and test-retest reliability. With Cronbach alphas ranging from .74 to .84, the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) demonstrated internal

reliability (Snyder et al., 1991; Sumerlin, 1997; Cramer & Drykacz, 1998). Additionally, the test-retest reliability was .85 over a period of three weeks (Anderson, 1988), .73 over a period of eight weeks (Harney, 1989), and from .76 to .82 over a period of 10 weeks (Gibb, 1990; Yoshinobu, 1989). The Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) has been found to be temporally stable (test-retest over several weeks of .85) and internally reliable (alphas of .74 and .88) (Snyder et al., 2002). Shorey et al. (2007) report the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) alpha at 0.77 with the alpha for the agency subscale at 0.79 and the alpha for the pathways subscale at 0.69. Also, the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) demonstrates adequate convergent and discriminate validity given its relations to other self-report measures such as the Life Orientation Test (Scheier & Carver, 1985) which measures optimism ($r = .60$).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to present an initial examination of the characteristics of hope in community college students. The data collected was analyzed in an effort to contribute to the existing literature on hope. The results of this study fill the existing gap in the literature regarding hope specifically in community college students.

Research Questions

1. What is the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students during their first semester of study as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991)?
2. What are the demographic characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of demonstrated hope?

Potential Significance of the Study

Student retention at institutions of higher education, specifically at community colleges, is an ongoing problem for college and university faculty, staff, and administrators (Wild & Ebbers, 2002; Moltz, 2008; Adams, 2011). As mentioned previously, Lopez (2009) claims that “hope predicts GPA and retention in college, and hope scores are more robust than high school GPA, SAT, and ACT scores.” Because of an open-access mission, community colleges tend to enroll a large number of academically underprepared students who are required to register for developmental education or remedial courses (McCabe, 2000). While approximately 33% of American college students are enrolled at community colleges, over 50% of those students are academically underprepared and are required to enroll in developmental or remedial education courses and programs when they enter the community college (Provasnik & Planty, 2008; Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010).

Prior research has shown that hope is linked to academic performance in students at middle schools, high schools, and at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions (Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002; Gallagher & Lopez, 2008; Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, & Lopez, 2011). This study was significant because the researcher proposed assessing the hope level of first-time, first-year students at a community college during their first semester of study, which is a practice that is not widespread in the literature.

Community colleges assess the academic preparedness of new students prior to enrolling in courses to provide the necessary academic support services that can enrich the academic success of students who are academically underprepared. The researcher explored the additional factor of hope level of first-time, first-year students at the

community college during the first semester of study to determine the percentage of students who have high, medium, and low hope levels. It was the belief of the researcher that if hope can be used to measure academic potential (Seligman, 2002) and can predict grade point average and retention in college (Lopez, 2009), community colleges should invest in measuring the hope level, in addition to academic preparedness, of all new incoming students and provide interventions to increase the hope levels of new students thereby enhancing their academic performance and ultimate persistence and retention rates.

Definition of Terms

1. Academic Performance: For the purpose of this study, academic performance is defined as a student's ability to successfully obtain an established academic goal such as degree attainment.
2. Academically Underprepared: For the purpose of this study, academically underprepared refers to students who place below institutionally established cut-off scores on content specific placement test scores in reading, writing, and mathematics.
3. Agency (thought): "Agency thought is described as the driving force or motivation that propels an individual along the pathway toward a desired goal" (Snyder, 2000, p. 10).
4. Alternate Pathways: Pathways explored when a hurdle blocks the original pathway toward an established goal.
5. College or University: Four-year, selective, baccalaureate degree granting institution of higher education.

6. Community College: Two-year, open access mission, associate degree and certificate granting institution of higher education.
7. Full-time enrollment: Enrolled in 12 college credit hours or more.
8. Goal: As the anchor of Snyder's Hope Theory, a goal provides a desired outcome to work toward.
9. Hope: The "sum of perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes" (Snyder, 2000, p. 8)
10. Hopeful- One who possess numerous ideas and abundant energy for the future.
11. Hope Scale- The Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) is a 12 item survey that assesses the summative measure of agency thought and pathways thought on an eight-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (definitely false) to 8 (definitely true). Four of the items assess agency thought, four of the items assess pathways thought, and four of the items serve as filler prompts.
12. Hurdle: A blockage along the pathway towards an established goal.
13. Non-traditional student: Students enrolled in college that are not recent high school graduates and older than 24.
14. Part-time enrollment: Enrolled in 11 college credit hours or less.
15. Pathways (thought): "Pathways thinking taps the perceived ability to produce plausible routes to goals" (Snyder, 2000, p. 9).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher introduced the study and presented the problem statement, theoretical rationale, statement of purpose, research questions, significance of the study, and the definition of terms. As outlined in this chapter, research has shown that

hope can be used to measure personal as well as academic potential (Seligman, 2002) and can predict grade point average and retention in college (Lopez, 2009), yet little is known about the hope level of community college students. This study is designed to inform practice by filling the existing gap in the literature regarding the hope level of community college students.

In the chapters that follow, the researcher will continue to construct the case for the significance of this study. Chapter 2 will discuss the state of the science as it pertains to the study of hope and its relation to academic performance in the field of education. Chapter 3 will further detail the study's research methodology and design. Chapter 4 will detail the findings of the study. Chapter 5 will conclude with a discussion of implications, limitations, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

In the late 1990s, the introduction of the concept of positive psychology provided researchers a holistic view of human behavior by exploring positive experiences, enduring psychological traits, positive relationships and positive institutions (Peterson, 2009). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), in reference to the emergence of positive psychology, stated, "We believe that a psychology of positive human functioning will arise, which achieves a scientific understanding and effective interventions to build thriving individuals, families, and communities." While studies on human behavior had since targeted learning primarily about negative aspects of human development (i.e. abnormal psychology) and curing mental illness, the positive psychology initiative focuses on well-being and optimal human functioning and adds to the understanding of mental health in children, adolescents, and adults (Larson, 2000). In addition to well-being and optimal human functioning, other constructs researched in the positive psychology literature include life satisfaction (Huebner, 1991), optimism (Carver & Scheier, 2002), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), and hope (Snyder, 1991).

In Chapter 1, the researcher introduced Snyder's Hope Theory which defines the construct of hope as the "sum of perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes" (Snyder, 2000, p. 8). The core elements of Snyder's Hope Theory include the conceptualization of a goal, the developed routes to obtain the conceptualized goal (pathways thought), and the motivation to obtain the conceptualized goal (agency thought). Hope thought is a "cognitive phenomena that

is the summative result of pathways thought plus agency thought” (Snyder, 2000, p. 10; Snyder & Lopez, 2006, pp. 188-192).

With Snyder’s Hope Theory as the framework, the development of the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) in 1991 has provided researchers a measurement instrument to assess an individual’s hope, a psychological construct that has since received a sparse yet consistent place in the research literature. Predominantly housed in the field of positive psychology, researchers have measured the hope level of individuals through studies that focus on hope as the primary factor of examination.

Previous studies suggest that hope, as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al. 1991), is positively correlated with social competence indicating that hopeful individuals are more likely to make friends more easily (Barnum, Snyder, Rapoff, Mani, & Thompson, 1998). Other studies have shown that hopeful individuals are more likely to have a greater sense of self-worth (Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, & Lopez, 2009) and tend to be more optimistic about life (Snyder et al. 1997; Gallagher & Lopez, 2009). It may not be surprising, then, that researchers have also successfully linked hope with well-being and life satisfaction (Chang, 1998; Gilman, Dooley, & Florell, 2006; Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2006; Gallagher and Lopez, 2009). In fact, research has shown that hopeful individuals tend to live longer than those who are less hopeful (Stern, Dhanda, & Hazuda, 2001).

In addition to the positive relationship between hope and other constructs of positive psychology such as life satisfaction, optimism, and well-being, hope has been studied to measure its relationship with performance. Specifically, hope has been measured in the workplace in professionals, and research indicates that hopeful

employees perform better at work (Peterson & Bryon, 2008). Hope has also been positively correlated with athletic performance in high school and college students meaning that hopeful students are more likely to excel as members of sports teams (Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Curry, Maniar, Sondag, & Sandsedt, 1999). In the same study by Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, and Rehm (1997), hope was linked to academic performance specifically in college student athletes.

Hope and Academic Performance in College

Earlier studies have also confirmed that a positive relationship exists between hope and academic performance, specifically in college students. To examine whether or not hopeful individuals set more difficult goals for themselves, Anderson (1988) used a preliminary version of the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) to assess hope in a sample of 130 first-year students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at a four-year, Midwestern institution in the United States. At the beginning of the semester, before any examinations were administered in the course, the participants, 48% self-identified as female and 52% self-identified as male, were also asked to set a realistic goal for their final grade in the course. The analysis of the hope levels and predicted final grades of the students indicated that Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) scores correlated positively with the grades the students had set as goals for themselves ($r = .32, p < .001$). This supports the idea that hopeful individuals set higher grade goals.

In the same study, Anderson (1988) examined the role of hope as a predictor of academic performance. Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) scores assessed at the beginning of the semester were correlated with final course grades at the end of the semester. With the final course grades as the criterion variable in the regression, Hope Scale (Snyder et

al., 1991) scores were determined to be a significant predictor of academic performance ($R^2 = .04, p < .05$). Thus, based on the results from these two studies, not only did hopeful students set higher grade goals, hopeful students also obtained higher course grades (Anderson, 1988).

In a similar study which also examined the predictive relationship between hope and academic performance, Harney (1989) assessed hope in a sample of 115 first-year students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at a four-year, Midwestern institution in the United States. The participants, 51% self-identified as female while 49% self-identified as male, were assessed for hope using a preliminary version of the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). Other data were also collected to include high school cumulative grade point average as well as final Introduction to Psychology course grades. The results of the study indicate that high school cumulative grade point average did not have a significant relationship with hope level ($r = -.10$) as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). A hierarchical regression indicated that, in step one, high school cumulative grade point average was not found to be a valid predictor of final Introduction to Psychology course grades ($R^2 = .00$), however the inclusion of Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) scores, entered at step two of the regression, strengthened the prediction ($\Delta R^2 = .04, p < .05$) (Harney, 1989).

To continue the discussion on the relationship between hope and academic performance in college students, Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, and Rehm (1997) examined the relationship between hope and academic performance in student athletes at a four-year, Midwestern institution in the United States. In this study, the sample consisted of two student populations, student athletes and student non-athletes. The sample of student

athletes totaled 86, with 52% self-identifying as female and 48% self-identifying as male. The sample of student non-athletes totaled 84, with 48 self-identifying as female and 36 self-identifying as male. Hope level data were collected with the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), and cumulative grade point averages served as the academic performance data. In the study, the Committee on Human Subjects did not approve the collection of cumulative grade point averages for the student non-athlete participants therefore, academic performance data were only collected with for each of the student athlete participants.

The results of the analysis of variance indicated that student athletes were more hopeful ($M = 54.61$, $SD = 5.75$) than the student non-athletes ($M = 51.65$, $SD = 4.60$). In terms of year-in-school, the first-year students had a mean hope level of 53.20 ($SD = 4.92$), the sophomores had a mean hope level of 51.76 ($SD = 6.83$), the juniors had a mean hope level of 53.00 ($SD = 4.68$) and the seniors had the highest reported mean hope level of 54.66 ($SD = 4.76$). Also, for the student athletes, the results of the regression analysis support the hypothesis that hope significantly predicted cumulative grade point average at the end of the semester ($R^2 = .08$, $p < .0009$) indicating that hopeful student athletes were more likely to obtain higher grade point averages (Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997).

More recent studies examining the role of hope as a unique predictor of academic performance yield similar results which support the positive relationship between hope and academic performance in college students. Bressler, Bressler, and Bressler (2010) studied the relationships between hope (as well as optimism and goal setting) and academic performance. Their study consisted of 219 students (78% self-identified as

female, 22% self-identified as male) enrolled in an online accounting course at a four-year, Southwestern institution in the United States. The sample consisted of 168 students who were pursuing a four-year college degree and 51 students who had already earned a four-year degree but were enrolled in the course to satisfy a requirement for the Certified Public Accountant exam.

Data were collected from participants with a battery of assessments which included the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) to measure the hope level, the Academic Optimism scale (Hoy et al., 2006) to measure optimism, and the Janis-Field Feelings of Inadequacy Scale Life Orientation Test (Eagly, 1967) which measures social self-esteem. The results of the Pearson Correlation to examine the relationship between hope and academic performance indicated that a significant relationship ($r = -.17, p < .05$) between hope and academic performance exists. Additionally, a correlation analysis indicated that a relationship ($r = .25, p < .05$) also exists between hope and academic optimism (Bressler, Bressler, & Bressler, 2010).

In another recent study, Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, and Wood (2010) set out to determine whether hope as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) can predict academic performance as measured by cumulative grade point average over general intelligence, divergent thinking, and conscientiousness. Data were collected from a sample of 129 first-year undergraduate students (60% self-identified female, 40% self-identified as male) at a four-year institution in the United Kingdom. Data were collected from the participants a total of three times while enrolled at the institution, the first at the point of entry, the second during the first year of study, and the third after graduation. The battery of assessments included the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) to assess hope,

the NEO Personality Inventory (Goldberg, 2006) to assess extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, Raven's Advanced Progressive Matrices (Raven, Raven, & Court, 2000) to assess general intelligence, and three 5-minute tests (Guildford, 1967) to assess divergent thinking.

A hierarchical regression analysis was constructed in which final degree scores served as the dependant variable and each of the predictor variables were entered into the analysis with Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) scores entered at the third level after the data collected relative to general intelligence, divergent thinking, and conscientiousness. The results indicate that statistical significance was reached at each of the three steps in the hierarchical regression with the two hope subscales (agency and pathways) found to provide an R^2 change = .03 (F change = 3.29, df = 2, 116, p = .041, r = .70, r^2 = .49, adjusted r^2 = .44). This means that students with higher hope levels in their first year of study are more likely to perform well academically (Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010).

While evidence that a positive relationship between hope and academic performance exists in college students (Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Bressler, Bressler, & Bressler, 2010; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010), a study by Jackson, Weiss, Lundquist, and Hooper (2003) suggested otherwise. Jackson, Weiss, Lundquist, and Hooper (2003) hypothesized, in another study on the predictive power of hope, that more favorable end of the year cumulative grade point averages would be predicted by higher levels of hope as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) near the beginning of the academic semester. Additionally, the researchers hypothesized that as decreased levels of procrastination and

decreased levels of social activity would also contribute to more favorable end of the year cumulative grade point averages.

A sample of 219 first-year college students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at a four-year, Midwestern institution in the United States were administered the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) during the fourth week of their first semester of study. Additionally, a demographics sheet was used to capture demographic characteristics, the Procrastination Scale (Tuckman, 1991) was administered to assess procrastination, and a two-item scale was created by the researchers to assess how much time students engaged in social and recreational activities. Of the total number of participants in the sample, 64% self-identified as female and 36% self-identified as male.

Contrary to the findings of other researchers (Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Bressler, Bressler, & Bressler, 2010; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010), the results of a regression analysis indicated that while procrastination ($p < .01$) and social activity ($p < .001$) each contributed to the prediction of cumulative grade point average, hope ($p < .05$) did not contribute significantly to the prediction of final cumulative grade point average at the end of the academic school year (Jackson, Weiss, Lundquist, & Hooper, 2003).

In a study by Snyder et al. (2002) with a similar sample size, hope level was assessed using the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) during the first week of the fall semester in a sample of 213 first-year students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at a four-year, Midwestern institution in the United States. The researchers examined whether or not hope predicts long-term academic outcomes, such as cumulative grade point average, and hypothesized that higher hope level scores as assessed with the

Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) would correlate positively with higher cumulative grade point averages. Academic performance data were captured by cumulative grade point average at the end of the semester.

Of the total number of participants, 52% self-identified as female and 48% self-identified as male. The researchers classified the participants by hope level into three categories, high hope, medium hope, and low hope. Thirty-three percent of the participants were categorized as having a high hope level with a mean Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) score of 58.76 (SD = 1.38, range of 56 to 63), 33% were determined to have a medium hope level with a mean Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) score of 51.93 (SD = 1.07, range of 49 to 53), and 34% were determined to have a low hope level with a mean Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) score of 40.76 (SD = 3.87, range of 27-46) (Snyder et al., 2002).

Using the three categories of hope level (high, medium, and low) as the independent variable and cumulative grade point average as the dependant variable, a one-way analysis of variance indicated that Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) score and cumulative grade point average was significant, $F(2, 210) = 5.51, p < .01$, with an eta squared of .05. The results of the analysis support the hypothesis that hopeful college students are more likely to have higher cumulative grade point averages than college students who have medium or low hope levels because Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) scores and cumulative grade point average were significantly, positively correlated, $r(211) = .21, p < .01$ (Snyder et al., 2002).

The evidence provided in the studies reviewed in this chapter thus far supports the idea that a positive relationship exists between hope and academic performance in college

students. Therefore, college students with higher levels of hope are more likely to perform well academically (Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Snyder et al., 2002; Bressler, Bressler, & Bressler, 2010; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010). Yet, since only the work by Snyder et al. (2002) has specifically categorized participants into varying levels of demonstrated hope according to relative Hope Scale (Snyder et al. 1991) scores, little is known about the distribution of participants on the scale of hope, from high, to medium, to low.

Varying Levels of Demonstrated Hope

The second part of this review of the literature highlights research studies that specifically categorized participants into varying levels of demonstrated hope according to the Hope Scale (Snyder et al. 1991) or its variation that was developed specifically for children, the Children's Hope Scale (Snyder, Hoza et al., 1997). In the previously mentioned study by Snyder et al. (2002), of the total number of participants, 33% of the participants were categorized by the researchers as having a high hope level with a mean Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) score of 58.76 ($SD = 1.38$, range of 56 to 63), 33% were determined to have a medium hope level with a mean Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) score of 51.93 ($SD = 1.07$, range of 49 to 53), and 34% were determined to have a low hope level with a mean Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) score of 40.76 ($SD = 3.87$, range of 27-46) (Snyder et al., 2002).

To continue the conversation regarding the levels of demonstrated hope in college students as measured the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), Chang (1998) explored hope, problem solving ability, and coping in 211 participants at a four-year institution in the Northeastern United States. Of the total number of participants in the study, 64% self-

identified as female and 36% self-identified as male. In this study, the researcher categorized the participants into two groups based on the results from the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) scores, high hope level and low hope level. The results of the assessment indicated that while 56% of the participants in the study were categorized as having a high hope level, 44% were assigned to low hope level group. The researcher did not report any specific mean hope levels, standard deviations, or ranges for the participants categorized in neither the high hope nor the low hope level groups (Chang, 1998).

A study by Gustafsson, Hassmen, and Podlog (2010) that explored the relationship between hope and burnout in competitive sports transitions the discussion in this review of the literature to include adolescents. Of the 178 student athletes between the ages of 15 and 20 that participated in the study, 35% self-identified as female and 65 self-identified as male. All of the student athletes in the study were enrolled in a sport academy in Sweden and were assessed for hope level using a Swedish language version of the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). The data were collected two months after the beginning of the academic semester.

The researchers distributed the results from the Hope Scale (Snyder et al. 1991) into three levels of demonstrated hope, high, medium, and low. Thirty-four percent of the participants were categorized as having high hope levels ($M = 41.5$, $SD = 3.2$, ranging from 38-48), 33% were designated as having medium hope levels ($M = 34.1$, $SD = 1.9$, ranging from 31-37), and 33% were designated as having low hope levels ($M = 25.7$, $SD = 3.8$, ranging from 17-30) (Gustafsson, Hassmen, & Podlog, 2010). In comparison to the study noted above by Snyder et al. (2002), the mean hope levels and respective ranges of

demonstrated hope were lower for the participants in the study by Gustafsson, Hassmen, and Podlog (2010).

In another study that reported on varying levels of demonstrated hope, the Children's Hope Scale (Snyder, Hoza et al., 1997) was administered to assess hope level in a sample of 335 middle and high school students from two Southeastern school districts in the United States (Gilman, Dooley, & Florell, 1996). Of the total number of participants, 57% self-identified as female and 43% self-identified as male. For the purpose of this study, researchers administered the Children's Hope Scale (Snyder, Hoza et al., 1997) to the participants. Much like the original Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) that is used to assess hope level in adults, the Children's Hope Scale (Snyder, Hoza et al., 1997) is a modified version of the original Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) and contains questions tailored specifically for children. The Children's Hope Scale (Snyder, Hoza et al., 1997) serves the same purpose as the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) in that it is used to measure the summative level of agency thinking and pathways thinking specifically in adolescents. The Children's Hope Scale (Snyder, Hoza et al., 1997) consists of six items on a 6-point Likert scale, with three items for each of the pathways and agency subscales. The items for each subscale are added together and can range from 3 to 18.

The results from the study indicate that 41% of the participants had high hope levels (pathways subscale: $M = 15.29$, $SD = 1.32$; agency subscale: $M = 15.97$, $SD = 1.22$), 36% had medium hope levels (pathways subscale: $M = 12.20$, $SD = 1.32$; agency subscale: $M = 13.69$, $SD = 1.82$), and 24% had low hope levels (pathways subscale: $M = 9.10$, $SD = 1.95$; agency subscale: $M = 9.54$, $SD = 1.61$). Researchers concluded that, in

this case, less than half of the participants were identified as having high hope levels (Gilman, Dooley, & Florell, 1996).

On a larger scale than the study by Gilman, Dooley, and Florell (1996), the Gallup Organization collected data with the Gallup Student Poll (Gallup, 2010). The Gallup Student Poll (Gallup, 2010) assessed the constructs of engagement, well-being, and hope in 642 students between grades 5 and 12 in a national study in the United States on youth readiness for the future. The web-based assessment prompted participants to respond to how strongly they agree or disagree with statements such as, “I know I will graduate from high school” and “I can find lots of ways around any problem.” The study concluded that while 63% of American students are engaged at school and 70% of American students think positively about their lives in terms of well-being, only 53% of American students are hopeful (Lopez, 2010). The results of the national study provide evidence that a majority of students between grades 5 through 12 are engaged at school and think positively about their lives, yet while the construct of hope is an especially compelling predictor of success in obtaining desired outcomes for youth (Snyder, 1995), the finding that only about half of the students surveyed are hopeful remains curious.

According to the findings by the Gallup Organization specific to the construct of hope, 53% of the students surveyed were *hopeful* which means they “possess numerous ideas and abundant energy for the future” (Lopez, 2010). Of the remaining student participants in the study, 31% of students were *stuck*, meaning they are unsure how to address problems and are unable to progress toward goals, and 16% of the students were *discouraged*, meaning they lack ideas and the energy to navigate problems and reach goals (Lopez, 2010). For the purpose of this review of the literature, the researcher

associates the term *hopeful* to refer to individuals with a high hope level, the term *stuck* to refer to individuals with medium hope level, and the term *discouraged* to refer to individuals with low hope level.

While Seligman (2002) reports that hope is a tenant of positive psychology that can be used to measure personal as well as academic performance, research indicates that middle school students with high hope levels have better grades in core subjects (Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, & Lopez, 2011). In addition, high school students with high hope levels have higher grade point averages (Snyder et al., 1991). More specifically regarding the construct of hope, according to the Gallup Student Poll (Gallup, 2010), only 42% of the students surveyed strongly agreed that they “energetically pursue their goals” and an even smaller 35% strongly believe that they “can find lots of ways around any problem.” Among other findings from the Gallup Student Poll (2010) relative to the construct of hope, 92% of the students surveyed strongly agree that they “know they will graduate from high school,” yet only 63% “can think of many ways to get good grades.”

The review of the literature indicates that students in middle school, high school, and in college have varying levels of demonstrated hope, high, medium, and low (Chang, 1998; Snyder, 2002; Gustafsson, Hassmen, & Podlog, 2010; Gilman, Dooley, & Florell, 1996; Gallup, 2010). The review of the literature also reveals specifically that college students with higher levels of hope are more likely to perform well academically (Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Snyder et al., 2002; Bressler, Bressler, & Bressler, 2010; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010). In fact, Lopez (2009) claims that “hope predicts GPA and retention in college, and hope scores are more robust than high school GPA, SAT, and ACT scores.”

An institution's retention rate is defined as the percentage of students that begin a program of study during a certain fall semester and return to the institution to continue a program of study during the following fall semester after completing a full academic year of study (fall semester, which begins in August, to spring semester, which ends in May) at the institution. Given the National First- to Second-Year Retention Rates by Institution Type chart published by ACT, the national retention rates are the lowest among public, community colleges. From the fall 2008 to fall 2009 the national retention rate for public, community colleges was at 53.7% (ACT, 2009), at 55.7% from fall 2009 to fall 2010 (ACT, 2010), at 55.4% from fall 2010 to fall 2011 (ACT, 2011), and at 55.5% from fall 2011 to fall 2012 (ACT, 2012). When compared to the retention rates for public, baccalaureate degree granting, four year institutions, public, community colleges trailed behind by 9.7% from fall 2011 to fall 2012 alone (ACT 2012).

Characteristics of Community College Students

As previously stated, studies currently exist on the relationship between hope and academic performance primarily in middle school students, high school students, and college students. While the majority of the existing studies on the relationship between hope and academic performance in college students focus primarily on first-year, undergraduate college students at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions, little is known about the hope level of students at community colleges. In Chapter 1, the researcher introduced that approximately 33% of all American college students are enrolled at community colleges in the United States (Provasnik & Planty, 2008). Over 50% of the students admitted to community colleges are considered academically underprepared as a result of placement tests in core academic disciplines such as reading,

writing, and mathematics, and are required to enroll in developmental or remedial education courses and programs when they enter the community college (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). Just over 30% of the students that enroll in developmental or remedial education courses and programs obtain a degree or certificate within six years at community colleges (Radford, Berkner, Wheelless, & Shepherd, 2010).

As stated in Chapter 1, the student population that attends community colleges in America is unique because, unlike the students who attend four-year institutions, more non-traditionally aged students tend to enroll in coursework at community colleges. The average age of students at the community college is 28. A large number, 42%, of students at community colleges are first-generation college students which means they come from families where neither parents nor guardians earned a baccalaureate degree. Students at community colleges are likely to have family (16% are single parents) and work obligations, and as a result nearly 60% are enrolled in part-time course work (NCES, 2009).

In one of only two studies found in the literature on hope that focused on students at a community college as the sample population, Savage and Smith (2008) explored the odds of degree completion relative to hope as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). The sample consisted of 443 participants enrolled in degree programs at the Community College of the Air Force. Of the total number of participants, who were all classified as being master sergeants, the third highest non-commissioned rank in the Air Force, 11% self-identified as female and 89% self-identified as male.

Data presented in the study from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (2004; 2005) states that both the Community College of the Air Force and

community colleges in general suffer from low degree completion at a rate of about 17% and 20%, respectively. The specific population of master sergeants was chosen by the researchers because while they are identified as career airmen, earning a degree is an important consideration in their career progression. Thus, even though 100% tuition assistance is provided to master sergeants, only 55% of active Air Force master sergeants have a degree from the Community College of the Air Force. This leaves a 45% gap that was of interest to the researchers.

The researchers entered the names of all active duty master sergeants obtained from the institution into SPSS to produce a stratified sample. The stratified sample included a dichotomous listing of those active master sergeants who had completed degrees and who had not completed degrees. A total of 1,403 active master sergeants comprised the sample, and those individuals received an electronic version of the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) through electronic mail message. Data was also collected through a survey instrument to capture each participant's gender, race/ethnicity, deployment frequency, shift worked, and perceived supervisor support. The researchers obtained from the institution degree completion data and Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test scores for each respondent and analyzed the data sets using logistic regression.

The results of a logistic regression analysis indicated that hope level as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) was a significant predictor of degree completion ($p < .05$). Hope had an odds ratio of 1.05 which means that for each unit of hope, the odds of degree completion were multiplied by 1.05. Thus, students with higher hope levels were more likely to complete their degrees than those students with lower hope

levels (Savage & Smith, 2008).

In another study on the relationship between hope and academic performance in community college students, Rudmann, Tucker, and Gonzalez (2008) examined the impact of hope as measured by the Domain Specific Hope Scale (Shorey & Snyder, 2004) on cumulative grade point average. Similar to the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) which measures hope as the summative value of pathways thought and agency thought exclusively, the Domain Specific Hope Scale (Shorey & Snyder, 2004) consists of only nine items designed to measure hope using all three components of Snyder's Hope Theory, pathways thoughts, agency thought, as well as goal clarity. The instrument was administered to two different populations of community college students in various institutions across Southern California.

For this study, the researchers also administered the Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning Scale (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992) to assess confidence in one's ability to regulate learning and study behaviors, the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001) to assess confidence in successfully completing school related tasks, the Academic and Career Goal Clarity Scale (Tucker & Rudmann, 2006) to assess academic and career goals, the Optimism Scale (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994) to assess optimism, and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1998) to assess positive and negative affect.

The two samples consisted of students participating in Disabled Students Programs and Services as well as Extended Opportunity Programs and Services. The Disabled Students Programs and Services sample consisted of 142 first-year students from five community colleges in Southern California. The students in the sample

received accommodations because of learning and physical disabilities as well as visual and hearing impairments. Of the total number of participants in the sample, 45% self-identified as female and 55 self-identified as male. The Extended Opportunity Programs and Services sample consisted of 278 first-year students from six community colleges in Southern California. The students in the sample received specialized serviced because they were identified as students from low-income families who qualify for financial aid. Of the total number of participants in the sample, 65% self-identified as female and 35% self-identified as male.

Hope level data were captured using an electronic version of the Domain Specific Hope Scale (Shorey & Snyder, 2004) during the first several weeks of the fall semester as well as at the final several weeks of the fall semester. Cumulative grade point average at the end of the semester was collected from each institution. The results from Pearson-Product Moment Correlations indicate that hope was not related to cumulative grade point average for the participants in the Disabled Students Programs and Services sample but that hope was related to cumulative grade point average for the participants in the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services sample ($p < .05$). Thus, for the participants in the Extended Opportunity Services and Programs sample, higher hope levels assessed at the beginning of the semester were related to higher cumulative grade point averages at the end of the semester (Rudmann, Tucker, & Gonzalez, 2008).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher reintroduced Snyder's Hope Theory which defines the construct of hope as the "sum of perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes" (Snyder, 2000, p. 8). As

stated in this chapter, the development of the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) in 1991 has provided researchers a measurement instrument to assess an individual's hope level, a psychological construct that has since received a sparse yet consistent place in the research literature. With a presence in the field of positive psychology, researchers have measured the hope level of individuals through studies that focus on hope as the primary variable of examination.

While research indicates that significant, positive relationships exist between Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) scores and other constructs of positive psychology such as self-worth (Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, & Lopez, 2009) and optimism (Snyder et al. 1997; Gallagher & Lopez, 2009), Seligman (2002) reports that hope is a tenant of positive psychology that can be used to measure personal as well as academic performance. The first part of this review of the literature highlighted research studies that examined the relationship between hope level and academic performance in college students (Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Snyder et al., 2002; Bressler, Bressler, & Bressler, 2010; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010).

The second part of this review of the literature examined studies that categorized participants by varying levels of demonstrated hope as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), or its variation such as the Children's Hope Scale (Snyder, Hoza et al., 1997). Few studies delineate specifically exactly how many participants in the respective samples are categorized as having high, medium, or low hope levels.

Finally, studies currently exist on the relationship between hope level and academic performance primarily in first-year, undergraduate college students at four-

year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions. While the majority of the existing studies on the relationship between hope level and academic performance focus primarily on first-year, undergraduate college students at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions, little is known about hope in students at community colleges. The review of the literature yielded only two studies that examined hope level and academic performance in community college students.

Research is warranted to explore hope level in community college students. Because such a large number of college students in the United States enroll in coursework at community colleges, and because the review of the literature in this chapter supports that hope is related to academic performance in first-year, undergraduate students enrolled in four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions, the current study will fill an existing gap in the literature and create understanding regarding hope specifically in first-time, first-year students at a community college.

In the chapter that follows, the researcher frames the examination on hope in first-time, first, year community college students to present the research design methodology for the study. The next chapter will include the general perspective of the study which reiterates the problem statement, reintroduces the research questions, and provides the overall framework for the research design. Following the general perspective, the researcher will introduce the research context as well as the participants of the study. The chapter will conclude with a description of the tools used to collect the data will be provided and a step-by-step procedural outline will frame the data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

In this chapter the researcher introduces the general perspective of the study which reiterates the problem statement, reintroduces the research questions, and provides the comprehensive framework for the research design. Following the general perspective, the researcher presents the research context as well as the proposed participants of the study. At the end of the chapter, a description of the tools used to collect the data will be provided and a step-by-step procedural outline will frame the data collection and analysis.

General Perspective

Snyder's Hope Theory defines the construct of hope as the "sum of perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes" (Snyder, 2000, p. 8). As stated in the previous chapters, the development of the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) in 1991 has provided researchers an instrument to assess the level of an individual's hope, a psychological construct that has since received a sparse yet consistent place in the research literature. With a prominent presence in the field of positive psychology, researchers have measured the hope level of individuals through studies that correlate hope with other quantitatively measured variables.

Studies currently exist on the relationship between hope and academic performance (Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002; Gallagher & Lopez, 2008; Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, & Lopez, 2011). While the majority of the existing studies in the literature on the relationship between hope and

academic performance in college students focus primarily on first-year, undergraduate college students at four-year colleges, little is known about hope and its relationship to academic performance in students at community colleges. The review of the literature yielded only two studies that examined hope level and academic performance in special populations of community college students to include students in Disabled Students Program and Services and in Extended Opportunity Programs and Services in Community Colleges throughout Southern California (Rudmann, Tucker, & Gonzalez, 2008) as well as master sergeants enrolled in degree programs at the Community College of the Air Force (Savage & Smith, 2008).

Research is warranted to explore hope level in community college students because a large number of college students in the United States enroll in coursework at community colleges. The review of the literature in Chapter 2 provides evidence that hope is related to academic performance in undergraduate students enrolled in four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions (Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Snyder et al., 2002; Bressler, Bressler, & Bressler, 2010; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010). This study fills an existing gap in the literature to create deeper understanding regarding hope specifically in first time, first-year students at a community college.

Problem Statement

Little is known about hope in community college students. This is a problem because the premise of hope characterizes an individual's ability to persist toward a goal when hurdles pose setbacks. Some of the factors that have the potential to serve as hurdles along the pathway to academic success for community colleges students include

being of non-traditional age, having first-generation status, having family obligations, having work obligations, having part-time enrollment status, and being academically underprepared. The purpose of this study is to present an initial examination on the characteristics of hope as it pertains to community college students. The data collected will be analyzed in an effort to contribute to the existing literature on hope. This study will fill the existing gap in the literature regarding hope specifically in community college students.

Research Questions

1. What is the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students during their first semester of study as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991)?
2. What are the demographic characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of demonstrated hope?

Research Design

For the purpose of this study, the researcher answered the research questions by deploying a quantitative descriptive survey research design to collect and analyze the data. According to Creswell, “quantitative research is a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship between variables. These variables can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures.” (2009, p. 4). The three major elements of a research design, described below, include the philosophical worldview, the strategy of inquiry, and the research methods (Creswell, 2009).

Philosophical Worldview

Because the purpose of this study was to present an initial examination on the characteristics of hope in community college students, the researcher approached the

research from a postpositivist worldview. According to Creswell (2009), postpositivists reflect a deterministic philosophy about research in which causes probably determine effects or outcomes. In this study, because previous research provides evidence that hope is linked to academic performance in college (Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Snyder et al., 2002; Bressler, Bressler, & Bressler, 2010; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010) and because little is known about the demonstrated hope levels of community college students, the researcher examined the hope of community college students.

Strategy of Inquiry

To answer the research questions, the researcher used a survey research strategy which provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population (Creswell, 2009). Data for each participant was collected using two instruments, the demographics sheet as shown in Appendix C and the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) as shown in Appendix A.

Research Methods

To answer the first research question regarding the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students, the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) was used to measure hope level of students in the sample population. The Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) was left by Dr. Snyder in the public domain as confirmed in an electronic mail message (in Appendix B) by Dr. Shane Lopez from the Gallup Organization. The twelve question, 8-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1-definitely false to 8-definitely true) survey includes four questions that measure agency (questions 2, 9, 10, and 12), four questions that measure pathways (1, 4, 6, and 8), and four filler questions (questions 3, 5,

7, and 11). The scale identifies separate yet related agency and pathways results as well as an overall hope level. The instrument allowed the researcher to identify the hope level for each participant in the study.

To answer the second research question regarding the characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of demonstrated hope, a demographics sheet was used to collect demographic data from each participant. Participants self-identified, on the eleven item demographics sheet, the following: gender, age range, race/ethnicity, the highest level of schooling for both parents, previous education, first-time, first-year student status, enrollment status, major, academic goal, developmental education course enrollment, and employment status.

Once the study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Boards at both the home institution and the institution where the research took place (Appendix E), data were collected from the participants during the first month of the fall semester. The instruments were administered in Introduction to Psychology courses. All data collected was entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and the analysis functions in Microsoft Excel were used to analyze the data.

Justification for Design

The use of a quantitative design to collect and analyze the data in this study aligns with the quantitative designs used by researchers in previous studies (Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Snyder et al., 2002; Bressler, Bressler, & Bressler, 2010; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010). To assess the hope of the students in the population, the researcher administered paper copies of the consent form, demographics sheet, and the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) during the

first month of the fall semester to students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at the community college where the research was conducted. Assessing student hope in the classroom setting at a community college makes the study comparable with methods used in previous studies at four-year colleges therefore aligning the study more accordingly with the methodologies that currently exist in the literature. In addition, 26 sections of Introduction to Psychology (with at least 25 available seats in each which totals upwards of 650 participants) were available during the fall semester at the institution. Thus, the methodology was comparatively aligned with previous studies that exist in the literature and the potential number of participants was robust.

Research Context

This study took place at a mid-sized, rural community college in New York State. The institution is a part of the State University of New York which includes 64 institutions of higher education, 30 of which are community colleges. The institution is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission, and the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships. The institution receives funding primarily from three sources, the State University of New York, the county of the State in which the main campus is housed, and student tuition. Funding is also generated through public and private donors.

Geography

The institution is located in Central New York. According to the institution's fact book, the main campus spans across more than 250 acres and is located 45 minutes from Rochester, NY in a region popular for its wineries. The main campus is unique because it

includes the community's public access television station, outdoor classrooms, nature trails, a simulated nursing hospital station, a therapeutic massage lab, a greenhouse, and an arboretum. The institution also has three campus centers within a 30 mile radius of the main campus which serve the educational needs of their respective communities.

Academics

The community college at which the research will take place offers programs that lead to completion of Associate of Science, Associate of Art, and Associate of Applied Science degrees as well as a plethora of one-year certificates. According to the institution's fact book, more than 55% of students graduate with Associate of Science or Associate of Art degrees which prepare them to transfer to four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions to obtain Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Art degrees. Others graduate with Associate of Applied Science degrees or certificates which prepare them to obtain employment in their field of study.

According to the institution's fact book, more than forty academic degree and certificate programs, honors studies, a Winter Session and Minimesters, online and hybrid, travel and expedition courses, internships, high school dual-credit programs, non-credit and workforce training offerings, and Adult Basic Education/GED programs are offered by the institution. The institution also holds Joint Admissions Agreements and Transfer Agreements with public and private four-year colleges and universities that allow graduates to transfer their credits in pursuit of bachelor's degrees, receiving full junior status.

Enrollment Demographics

According to the institution's Fall 2011 Enrollment Report, in the fall of 2011,

6,811 full-time and part-time students attended classes at all four campus centers and online, with full-time and part-time enrollment totaling 3,819 and 2,992, respectively. Nearly 77% of the full-time students enrolled at the community college in the fall of 2011 were age 24 and younger, and the average age of full-time students was approximately 23 years old. Approximately 65% of the part-time students enrolled at the community college in the fall of 2011 were age 24 and younger, and the average age of part-time students was approximately 24 years old. Females outnumber the males in the enrollment figures for both full-time and part-time students at 50.2% and 61.9%, respectively. The programs of study with the highest enrollment include business administration, criminal justice, and human services. As the direct result of placement testing, a significant number of students were placed into developmental education courses in reading, writing, and mathematics in the fall of 2011 at approximately 51%, approximately 55%, and approximately 67%, respectively.

Retention

According to the institution's retention reports, as generated by the Office of Institutional Research, the retention rate of full-time students from fall semester to fall semester has decreased steadily since 2009 and has since fallen below the national average as reported in the ACT Institutional Data File. An institution's retention rate is defined as the percentage of students that begin a program of study during a certain fall semester and return to the institution to continue a program of study during the following fall semester after completing a full academic year of study (fall semester, which begins in August, to spring semester, which ends in May) at the institution. The fall 2008 to fall 2009 retention rate was 59.7% at the institution which was well above the national

average of 53.7% (ACT, 2009). The fall 2009 to fall 2010 retention rate was 55.3% which fell below the national average of 55.7% (ACT, 2010). The fall 2010 to fall 2011 retention rate was 53.8% which fell even further below the national average of 55.3% (ACT, 2011).

Research Participants

As previously stated, Provasnik and Planty (2008) note that approximately 33% of all American college students are enrolled at community colleges. The student population that attends community colleges in America is unique because, unlike the students who attend four-year institutions, more non-traditionally aged students tend to enroll in coursework at community colleges. The average age of students at the community college is 28. A large number, 42%, of students at community colleges are first-generation college students which means they come from families where neither parents nor guardians earned a baccalaureate degree. Students at community colleges are likely to have family (16% are single parents) and work obligations, and as a result nearly 60% are enrolled in part-time course work (NCES, 2009).

Because of an open-access mission, community colleges tend to admit a large number of academically underprepared students who are required to enroll in developmental or remedial education courses and programs (McCabe, 2000). Interestingly, over 50% of the students admitted to community colleges are considered academically underprepared as a result of placement test scores in core academic disciplines such as reading, writing, and mathematics, and are required to enroll in developmental or remedial education courses and programs when they enter the community college (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). Just over 30% of the students that

enroll in developmental or remedial education courses and programs obtain a degree or certificate within six years at community colleges (Radford, Berkner, Wheelless, & Shepherd, 2010).

For the purpose of this study, the research participants in the population included students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology at the community college during the fall semester of 2012. To better align this study with previous research on the topic of hope and academic performance at four-year institutions which assessed hope in first-year college students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses (Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Snyder et al., 2002; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010), the researcher targeted a convenience sample of first-time, first-year students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at the institution.

To align with the enrollment data reported above from the institution regarding the unique demographic characteristics of community college students, the researcher collected demographic data from the sample according the following characteristics: gender, age range, race/ethnicity, the highest level of schooling for both parents, previous education, first-time, first-year student status, enrollment status, major, academic goal, developmental education course enrollment, and employment status.

Support

A listing of course offerings for all physical sections of Introduction to Psychology at the institution was obtained from the course offerings website maintained by the Office of Student Records at the institution. The researcher first contacted via electronic mail message the chairperson of the department of social sciences at the

institution to present the purpose of the study and the methodology for data collection because the data collection involved the classroom instructors of the Introduction to Psychology courses at the institution. It was the intent of the researcher to garner administrative support for the study by first being in direct contact with the chairperson of the department of social sciences to whom the classroom instructors of the Introduction to Psychology courses report.

Access

With the support of the chairperson of the department of social sciences at the institution, the researcher sent to all classroom instructors teaching the physical sections of Introduction to Psychology courses during the fall semester of 2012 at the institution an electronic mail message. The electronic mail message formally requested for the researcher to have access to the students in their respective courses to collect data for the study. The request explained the purpose of the study and outlined the expectations of the classroom instructor as a part of the data collection process for the study.

Sample Selection

For the purpose of this study, the convenience sample includes first-time, first-year community college students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at the institution during the fall semester of 2012. As previously stated, during the fall semester of 2012, the institution offered 26 sections of Introduction to Psychology at four physical campus centers, each enrolling approximately 25 for a total of 650 potential participants in the study. Additionally, one online section of Introduction to Psychology allows for the enrollment of 100 students. For this study, the researcher focused on the students enrolled in the course sections in physical classrooms as they were in direct, face-to-face contact

with their classroom instructor during the data collection period. This became essential in the delivery of the directions given during the administration of the assessment instruments in the classroom. To remain consistent with the delivery of the instructions and the administration of the assessment instruments during the data collection period, the students enrolled in the online section of Introduction to Psychology were not included in the sample.

First-time, first-year student status was determined by question number six on the demographics sheet (Appendix C) which asked the participant to self-identify with a *Yes* or a *No* the answer to the following question: “*Not counting credit-bearing college courses taken in high school/home school, have you ever been enrolled in college before this semester?*” If a participant replied with *No*, the demographics sheet and respective Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) was included in the data analysis because the participant self-identified as being a first-time, first-year community college student. If a participant replied with *Yes*, the demographics sheet and respective Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) was not included in the analysis because the participant self-identified as having been previously enrolled in credit bearing courses prior to the semester of study and therefore not a first-time, first-year community college student.

Sample Size

The sampling design for this study was single stage because the researcher was granted access to the population of students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at the institution and was able to sample the participants directly. Because the researcher was formerly employed at the institution where the research was selected to occur, the researcher was granted access to the convenience sample. All students enrolled

in the Introduction to Psychology courses that the researcher was granted access to were invited to participate in the study, and only the data collected from consenting participants over the age of 18 who were also first-time, first-year students at the institution was used. Using a web-based, sample size calculator, while the sample size for this study was 139 and the total population of community college students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at the institution was estimated at 650, the confidence level is 95% and the confidence interval is 7.4%.

Instruments to be Used in Data Collection

The instruments used to collect data for this study included the consent form, the demographics sheet, and the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). The consent form, demographics sheet, and Hope Scale (Snyder et al. 1991) were administered by classroom instructors in physical Introduction to Psychology classes at the institution. The researcher provided to the classroom instructors a detailed script to follow when facilitating the data collection in the classroom.

Consent Form

To acquire the permission of the participants to actively engage in the study, a consent form (Appendix D) clearly described the purpose of the study and outlined the expectations of the participant. The researcher holds in the strictest confidence all materials collected from the participants. All data were aggregated and no individual participants were identified in the presentation of results. The researcher had no relationship to any of the participants. Additionally, the consent form asked the participant to confirm that she or he was a first-time, first-year college student at the institution and that she or he was at least 18 years of age.

Demographics Sheet

The demographics sheet (Appendix C) captured relevant demographic data about each participant. The data included information that identified each participant by first-time, first-year student status. To align with the enrollment data reported above from the institution regarding the unique demographic characteristics of community college students, the researcher collected demographic data from the sample according the following characteristics: gender, age range, race/ethnicity, the highest level of schooling for both parents, previous education, first-time, first-year student status, enrollment status, major, academic goal, developmental education course enrollment, and employment status.

Hope Scale

Hope was measured using a paper version of the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). As shown in Appendix A, the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) is a 12 item survey that assesses the summative measure of agency thought and pathways thought on an eight-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (definitely false) to 8 (definitely true). On the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), four of the items assess agency thought (2, 9, 10, and 12), four of the items assess pathways thought (1, 4, 6, and 8), and four of the items serve as filler prompts (3, 5, 7, and 11). While the construct of hope is defined by Snyder (2000, p. 8) as the “sum of perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes,” the hope level of each participant is determined by adding together the numerical responses to the agency thought specific items and the pathways thought specific items.

The Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) has been used to assess hope level in individuals for over 20 years. The hope level of each participant could range from 8 to 64 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), with 8 being the lowest possible score and 64 being the highest possible score. In this study, participants that scored between 46 and 64 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) are identified as having a high hope level. Participants that scored between 27 and 45 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) are identified as having a medium hope level. Participants that scored between 8 and 26 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) are identified as having a low hope level.

The fact that the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) has been actively used by researchers in studies on human behavior for over two decades provides credibility for its use in this study. Snyder et al. (2000) reports that the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) had satisfactory internal consistency and test-retest reliability. With Cronbach alphas ranging from .74 to .84, the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) demonstrated internal reliability (Snyder et al., 1991; Sumerlin, 1997; Cramer & Drykacz, 1998). Additionally, the test-retest reliability was .85 over a period of three weeks (Anderson, 1988), .73 over a period of eight weeks (Harney, 1989), and from .76 to .82 over a period of 10 weeks (Gibb, 1990; Yoshinobu, 1989). The Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) has been found to be temporally stable (test-retest over several weeks of .85) and internally reliable (alphas of .74 and .88) (Snyder et al., 2002). Shorey et al. (2007) report the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) alpha at 0.77 with the alpha for the agency subscale at 0.79 and the alpha for the pathways subscale at 0.69. Also, the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) demonstrates adequate convergent and discriminate validity given its relations to other self-report measures such as the Life Orientation Test (Scheier & Carver, 1985) which measures

optimism ($r = .60$).

Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

The procedures for data collection and analysis are framed by a quantitative research design. The data were collected from participants enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at the institution using the aforementioned demographics sheet and the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). The data collected was entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and was analyzed using the descriptive statistical functions in Microsoft Excel. For the purpose of this study, the procedures are broken down by the following sections: data collection and data analysis.

Data Collection

Immediately following approval from the respective Institutional Review Boards at the home institution (Appendix E) and the institution at which the research will be taking place, the researcher first contacted via electronic mail message the chairperson of the department of social sciences at the institution to present the purpose of the study and the methodology for data collection because the quantitative data collection will involve the classroom instructors of the Introduction to Psychology courses at the institution. While both administrators and faculty members at the institution at which the research took place had previously expressed interest in this study, it was the intent of the researcher to garner administrative support, and permission to conduct the study, from the chairperson of the department of social sciences to whom the classroom instructors of the Introduction to Psychology courses report.

With the support of the chairperson of the department of social sciences at the institution, the researcher sent to all classroom instructors teaching the physical sections

of Introduction to Psychology during the fall semester of 2012 at the institution an electronic mail message. The names and electronic mail message addresses of the classroom instructors were obtained through the institutional course offerings listing website. The electronic mail message formally requested that the researcher have access to the students in each classroom instructor's respective course to collect data for the study. The request explained the purpose of the study and outlined the expectations of the classroom instructor as a part of the data collection process for the study. The electronic mail message also requested that the classroom instructor dedicate approximately 15 minutes to administer the research packet to the students in their respective courses during a class session sometime during the first month at the beginning of the fall semester of 2012.

The role of the classroom instructor. The classroom instructor administered to the students enrolled in their respective Introduction to Psychology courses the research packet which contained the consent form, the demographics sheet, and the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). Each classroom instructor received enough research packets for each student enrolled in each of their Introduction to Psychology courses and was given a script (Appendix F) to read to the students prior to administering the research instruments. The script provided consistency throughout the administration of the data collection because each classroom instructor read the same instructions to the students. Once the instructions on the script were presented by the classroom instructor, the classroom instructor distributed the research packets to the students to be completely filled out. Once completely filled out, the classroom instructor collected the completed research packets and submitted them to the main office of the department of social

sciences from where the researcher retrieved the completed packets.

Distribution and collection. The researcher collated envelopes for each classroom instructor containing research packets for the number of students enrolled in each respective Introduction to Psychology course. The enrollment numbers for each course were obtained through the institutional course offerings listing website. The envelopes, containing the unused research packets, for each classroom instructor were made available in the main office of the department of social sciences on the first day of classes for the fall semester of 2012 at the institution. The envelopes, containing the completed and any remaining unused research packets, were submitted to the main office of the department of social sciences at the completion of the data collection.

Data Analysis

The data collected were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet by the researcher. To answer the research questions regarding first-time, first-year community college students, it was necessary for the researcher to identify which of the participants were first-time, first-year community college students. Focusing on question number six on the demographics sheet, the researcher used the sort function in Microsoft Excel to determine which participants self-identified as first-time, first-year students. Question number six asked the participant, “*Not counting credit-bearing college courses taken in high school, have you ever been enrolled in college before this semester?*” Participants that self-identified by selecting *No* (meaning they had not ever been enrolled in college before the semester when the research had taken place) were identified by the researcher as first-time, first-year college students, and the relative data were analyzed to answer both of the two research questions that frame the current study. If a participant replied

with *Yes*, the data collected on the demographics sheet and respective Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) was not included in the analysis because the participant self-identified as having been previously enrolled in credit bearing courses prior to the semester of study and therefore not a first-time, first-year community college student.

Once all data collected were entered into the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and the sample of first-time, first-year community college students was identified, the researcher used the analysis functions in Microsoft Excel to analyze the hope level data. To answer the first research question, regarding the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students during their first semester of study as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), the researcher individually scored each completed Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) collected during the data collection period. To do this, the researcher removed the participant responses for the filler Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) items (questions 3, 5, 7, and 11) which do not assess agency thoughts or pathways thoughts. The responses that remained (from questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 12) were added together using the sum function in Microsoft Excel and the results enabled the researcher to identify a demonstrated level of hope for each participant.

The demonstrated levels of hope for each participant, as well as the respective demographic data collected for each participant with the demographics sheet, were then sorted in order from highest to lowest using the sort function in Microsoft Excel to determine which of the participants in the sample had high levels of demonstrated hope, medium levels of demonstrated hope, and low levels of demonstrated hope. As mentioned previously, for the purpose of this study, participants that scored between 46 and 64 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) were identified in the high hope level

category. Participants that scored between 27 and 45 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) were identified in the medium hope level category. Participants that scored between 8 and 26 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) were identified in the low hope level category.

Given the total number of respondents, content validity was established because the researcher was accurately able to identify how many participants in the sample were in each of the three categories of demonstrated level of hope (high, medium, and low). For each of the three categories of demonstrated hope, the researcher reported the number of participants in the sample and the percentage that were identified in each category. Additionally, using the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) scores of the participants in the sample, the researcher reported the mean, the median, the mode, and the standard deviation using the analysis functions in Microsoft Excel.

So the researcher could analyze each of the demographic characteristics included on the demographics sheet, separate Microsoft Excel spreadsheets were created for each of the three categorical levels of demonstrated hope (high, medium, and low). To answer the second research question regarding the demographic characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of demonstrated hope, the researcher separately analyzed the demographic characteristic data collected for each of the three categorical levels of demonstrated hope. For each of the three categories, the researcher used the analysis functions in Microsoft Excel to report the number and percentage of participants in the sample that were identified as having high, medium, and low levels of demonstrated hope. In addition, the mean Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) score was reported for each demographic characteristic. The demographic characteristics reported

for each of the varying levels of demonstrated hope included, gender, age range, race and ethnicity, schooling of parents, educational background of participant, academic goal, academic major, enrollment status, developmental education course enrollment, and employment status.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter the researcher introduced the general perspective of the study which reiterated the problem statement, reintroduced the research questions, and provided the overall framework for the research design. Following the general perspective, the researcher introduced the research context as well as the participants of the study. To conclude the chapter, a description of the tools used to collect the data was provided, and a step-by-step procedural outline framed the description of the data collection and analysis.

The analysis of the data collected allowed the researcher to answer both research questions that guided the study. To answer the first question regarding the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students during their semester of study, the researcher used the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) to assess hope. Given these results, the researcher was able to then answer the second research question regarding the demographic characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of demonstrated hope.

In the next chapter, the researcher reports specifically on the findings of the study. The researcher identifies the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students during their first their first semester of study as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). In addition, the researcher reports on the findings about the

demographic characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of demonstrated hope.

Chapter 4: Results

In Chapter 3, the researcher introduced the general perspective of the study which reiterated the problem statement, reintroduced the research questions, and provided the overall framework for the research design. Following the general perspective, the researcher described the research context as well as the participants of the study. To conclude the chapter, a description of the tools used to collect the data was provided, and a step-by-step procedural outline framed the plan for data collection and analysis.

For the purpose of this study, the problem is that little is known about the hope level of students enrolled at community colleges. This study presents an initial examination on the characteristics of hope in students at a community college. In this chapter, the researcher presents the results of the current study.

The results of this study, as presented in this chapter, allow the researcher to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students during their first semester of study as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991)?
2. What are the demographic characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of demonstrated hope?

Framed by the research questions noted above, this chapter begins with the results from the data analysis guided by the first research question regarding the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students. Based on the results from the first

research question, the results from the data analysis guided by the second research question regarding the demographic characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of hope are then presented.

Data Analysis and Findings

For the current study, data collection efforts yielded responses from 272 community college students (only 139 of which were identified as having first-time, first year status) enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at the institution where the research was conducted. Six faculty members at the institution permitted the researcher to collect data in their classes. Data were collected in 13 sections of Introduction to Psychology courses which spanned across each of the institution's four campus centers (ten at the main campus, and one at each of the smaller campus centers). The Introduction to Psychology courses took place on the days of the week from Monday through Friday and included one three-hour section that met one time per week for the entire semester on Saturday. One of the courses that met three times per week (on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) began at 7:00 a.m., and two (one on Tuesday and one on Thursday) of the evening courses met once per week for three hours beginning at 6:30 p.m.

All of the students in attendance in the Introduction to Psychology classes on the dates when the data were collected were invited to participate in the study as long as the age requirement of 18 and over was met. Of the 272 responses collected by the researcher, four were not completed and therefore were not included in the analysis. All responses from participants were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet by the researcher, and each response was assigned a number by the researcher from one to 268 to verify data entry accuracy. The researcher verified data entry accuracy first by going

though each Demographics Sheet and respective Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) a second time to make certain that all data were entered correctly. No errors were found when the data entry was checked for accuracy.

Then, the researcher generated ten random numbers using random.org. The researcher used the ten random numbers to verify that the data on the corresponding Demographics Sheet and respective Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) matched exactly with the data entered into the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. No errors were found when the data entry was checked for accuracy.

While all of the students (18 years of age and older) in the Introduction to Psychology classes were invited to participate in the study, it was necessary for the researcher first to identify which of the participants were first-time, first-year community college students. In order to identify which of the participants were first-time, first-year community college students, the researcher referred to the demographics sheet where each participant self-identified status as a first-time, first year student. Focusing specifically on question number six on the demographics sheet, the researcher used the sort function in Microsoft Excel to determine which participants self-identified as first-time, first-year students. Question number six on the demographics sheet asked the participant, “*Not counting credit-bearing college courses taken in high school, have you ever been enrolled in college before this semester?*” Participants who selected *No* (meaning they had not ever been enrolled in college before the semester when the research had taken place) were identified by the researcher as first-time, first-year college students, and the relevant data were analyzed to answer both of the two research

questions that frame the current study. Data collection efforts yielded usable responses from 139 first-time, first-year participants (52% of the total number of participants). Using a web-based, sample size calculator, while the sample size for this study is 139 and the total population of community college students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at the institution is estimated at 650 (21% of the total population), the confidence level is 95% and the confidence interval is 7.4%.

Research Question One: Hope Level

The first research question regarding the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students during their first semester of study as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al, 1991) guided the first descriptive analysis of the data. As previously stated, the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) is a 12 item survey that assesses the summative measure of agency thought and pathways thought on an eight-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (definitely false) to 8 (definitely true). On the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), four of the items assess agency thought (2, 9, 10, and 12), four of the items assess pathways thought (1, 4, 6, and 8), and four of the items serve as filler prompts (3, 5, 7, and 11). While the construct of hope is defined by Snyder (2000, p. 8) as the “sum of perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes,” the hope level of each participant is determined by adding together the numerical responses to the agency thought specific items and the pathways thought specific items.

The Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) has been used to assess hope level in individuals for over 20 years. The hope level of each participant could range from 8 to 64 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), with 8 being the lowest possible score and 64

being the highest possible score. In this study, participants that scored between 46 and 64 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) are identified as having a high hope level.

Participants that scored between 27 and 45 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) are identified as having a medium hope level. Participants that scored between 8 and 26 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) are identified as having a low hope level.

The first research question asked, “*What is the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students during their first semester of study as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991)?*” For the 139 first-time, first year participants in the sample, the researcher removed from the spreadsheet the filler item responses for questions number three, five, seven, and eleven on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) and used the sum function in Microsoft Excel to determine the hope level of each participant.

To answer the first research question, the researcher used the data analysis functions in Microsoft Excel. The analysis of the data collected with the Hope Scale (Snyder et al. 1991) concluded that 122 of 139 (88%) of the first-time, first-year participants surveyed ($\bar{x} = 54$, Md = 54, Mo = 57, s = 4.32) had high hope levels which means their Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) scores were reported in the range between 46 and 64. In the high hope level category, the highest reported hope level was 64 and the lowest reported hope level was 46. The remaining 17 (12%) first-time, first-year participants surveyed ($\bar{x} = 41$, Md = 43, Mo = 43, s = 3.76) were reported in the medium hope level category ranging between 27 and 45. The highest reported hope level in the medium hope level category was 45 and lowest reported hope level was 31. None of the first-year, first-time participants surveyed were classified into the low hope level category

which ranges in Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) score from 8 to 26. The data described in the paragraph above are outlined in the Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Hope Levels of First-time, First-year Community College Students during their First Semester of Study as Measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991)

Hope Level	Hope Scale Score Range	n = 139	%	\bar{x}	Md	Mo	s
High Hope Level	46 – 64	122	88	54	54	57	4.32
Medium Hope Level	27 – 45	17	12	41	43	43	3.76
Low Hope Level	8 – 26	0	0	0	0	0	0

Research Question Two: Demographic Characteristics

To answer the second research question, “*What are the demographic characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of demonstrated hope?*,” the researcher analyzed the demographic data provided by the first-time, first year participants classified into each of the varying levels of demonstrated hope. The demographics sheet captured relevant data about each participant. The data included information that identified each participant by first-time, first-year student status. To align with the enrollment data reported previously from the institution regarding the unique demographic characteristics of community college students, the researcher collected demographic data from the sample according the following characteristics: gender, age range, race/ethnicity, the highest level of schooling for both parents, previous education, first-time, first-year student status, enrollment status, major, academic goal, developmental education course enrollment, and employment status.

The data analysis functions in Microsoft Excel were used to perform the analysis

of the demographic data provided by the first-time, first-year participants. The demographic data relative to gender, age range, race/ethnicity, the highest level of schooling for both parents, previous education, enrollment status, major, academic goal, developmental education course enrollment, and employment status are analyzed in the following pages according to demonstrated hope level, high, medium, and low.

Gender. Of the 122 first-time, first-year participants in the high hope level category, 39 (32%) self-identified as male and 83 (68%) self-identified as female. The mean hope level scores for both the males and the females in the high hope level category were 55 and 54, respectively. Of the 17 first-time, first-year participants in the medium hope level category, 4 (24%) self-identified as male and 13 (76%) self-identified as female. The mean hope level scores for both the males and the females in the medium hope level category were 36 and 43, respectively. None of the first-time, first-year participants reported low hope level scores. The data described in the paragraph above are outlined in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Demographic Characteristics of First-time, First-year Community College Students at Varying Levels of Demonstrated Hope: Gender

Demographic Characteristic:	High Hope n (%)	High Hope \bar{x}	Medium Hope n (%)	Medium Hope \bar{x}	Low Hope n (%)	Low Hope \bar{x}
Male	39 (32%)	55	4 (24%)	36	0 (0%)	0
Female	83 (68%)	54	13 (76%)	43	0 (0%)	0

Age range. Of the 122 first-time, first-year participants in the high hope level category, 111 (91%) were between the ages of 18 and 23 with a mean hope level score of 54. In the age range between 24 and 29, 5 (4%) first-time, first year participants yielded a

mean hope level score of 52. A total of 6 (5%) first-time, first-year participants were reported in the 30 and above age range with a mean hope level score of 54. Of the 17 first-time, first-year participants in the medium hope level category, all 17 (100%) were between the ages of 18 and 23 and yielded a mean hope level score of 41. None of the first-time, first-year participants reported low hope level scores. The data described in the paragraph above are outlined in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Demographic Characteristics of First-time, First-year Community College Students at Varying Levels of Demonstrated Hope: Age Range

Demographic Characteristic: Age Range	High Hope n (%)	High Hope \bar{x}	Medium Hope n (%)	Medium Hope \bar{x}	Low Hope n (%)	Low Hope \bar{x}
18-23	111 (91%)	54	17 (100%)	36	0 (0%)	0
24-29	5 (4%)	52	0 (0%)	0	0 (0%)	0
30 and above	6 (5%)	54	0 (0%)	0	0 (0%)	0

Race and ethnicity. Of the 122 first-time, first-year participants in the high hope level category, 2 (2%) self-identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native, 1 (1%) self-identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, 9 (7%) self-identified as Black/African American, 4 (3%) self-identified as Hispanic/Latino, 104 (85%) self-identified as White/Caucasian, and 2 (2%) self-identified as Other, with mean hope level scores of 51, 57, 55, 52, 54, and 56 respectively. Of the 17 first-time, first-year participants in the medium hope level category, 1 (6%) self-identified as Black/African American and 16 (94%) self-identified as White/Caucasian, with a mean hope level score of 45 and 41, respectively. None of the first-time, first-year participants reported low hope level scores. The data described in the

paragraph above are outlined in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Demographic Characteristics of First-time, First-year Community College Students at Varying Levels of Demonstrated Hope: Race and Ethnicity

Demographic Characteristic: Race and Ethnicity	High Hope n (%)	High Hope \bar{x}	Medium Hope n (%)	Medium Hope \bar{x}	Low Hope n (%)	Low Hope \bar{x}
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	2 (2%)	51	0 (0%)	0	0 (0%)	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	1 (1%)	57	0 (0%)	0	0 (0%)	0
Black/ African American	9 (7%)	55	1 (6%)	45	0 (0%)	0
Hispanic/Latino	4 (3%)	52	0 (0%)	0	0 (0%)	0
White/Caucasian	104 (85%)	54	16 (94%)	41	0 (0%)	0
Other	2 (2%)	56	0 (0%)	0	0 (0%)	0

Schooling of parents. Of the 122 first-time, first-year participants in the high hope level category, 13(11%) reported that the highest level of schooling that their father completed was middle school/junior high with a mean hope level score of 52. Forty-eight (39%) reported that college or beyond was the highest level of schooling completed by their father with a mean hope scale score of 55. Fifty-seven (47%) of the first-time, first-year participants reported that high school was the highest level of schooling for their father with a mean hope level score of 53. Four (3%) of the first-time, first-year participants selected other/unknown for the highest level of schooling for their father with a mean hope level score of 53.

Of the 17 first-time, first-year participants in the medium hope level category, 5 (29%) reported that college or beyond was the highest level of schooling completed by their father with a mean hope scale score of 37. Twelve (71%) of the first-time, first-year participants reported that high school was the highest level of schooling for their father with a mean hope level score of 43. None of the first-time, first-year participants reported low hope level scores.

Shifting the focus to the mother's highest level of schooling, for the 122 first-time, first-year participants in the high hope level category, 6 (5%) reported that the highest level of schooling that their mother completed was middle school/junior high with a mean hope level score of 51. Sixty-seven (55%) reported that college or beyond was the highest level of schooling for their mother with a mean hope level score of 55. Forty-five (37%) of the first-time, first-year participants reported that high school was the highest level of schooling completed by their mother with a mean hope level score of 54. Four (3%) of the first-time, first year participants selected other/unknown for the highest level of schooling for their mother with a mean hope level score of 55.

Of the 17 first-time, first-year participants in the medium hope level category, 1 (6%) reported that college or beyond was the highest level of schooling completed by their mother with a mean hope scale score of 31. Eight (47%) reported that college or beyond was the highest level of schooling for their mother with a mean hope level score of 39. Eight (47%) of the first-time, first-year participants reported that high school was the highest level of schooling for their mother with a mean hope level score of 44. None of the first-time, first-year participants reported low hope level scores. The data described in the paragraphs above are outlined in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Demographic Characteristics of First-time, First-year Community College Students at Varying Levels of Demonstrated Hope: Schooling of Parents

Demographic Characteristic: Schooling of Parents	High Hope n (%)	High Hope \bar{x}	Medium Hope n (%)	Medium Hope \bar{x}	Low Hope n (%)	Low Hope \bar{x}
Father-Middle School/Junior High	13 (11%)	52	0 (0%)	0	0 (0%)	0
Father-College and Beyond	48 (39%)	55	5 (29%)	37	0 (0%)	0
Father-High School	57 (47%)	53	12 (71%)	43	0 (0%)	0
Father-Other/Unknown	4 (3%)	53	0 (0%)	0	0 (0%)	0
Mother-Middle School/Junior High	6 (5%)	51	1 (6%)	31	0 (0%)	0
Mother-College and Beyond	67 (55%)	55	8 (47%)	39	0 (0%)	0
Mother-High School	45 (37%)	54	8 (47%)	44	0 (0%)	0
Mother-Other/Unknown	4 (3%)	55	0 (0%)	0	0 (0%)	0

Educational background of participant. Of the 122 first-time, first-year participants in the high hope level category, 109 (89%) were high school graduates, 10 (8%) were general education diploma recipients, 2 (2%) were home schooled, and 1 (1%) selected other with mean hope level scores of 54, 50, 57, and 57 respectively. Of the 17

first-time, first-year participants in the medium hope level category, 15 (88%) were high school graduates, 2 (12%) were general education diploma recipients, 0 (0%) were home schooled, and 0 (0%) selected other with mean hope level scores of 41, 45, 0, and 0, respectively. None of the first-time, first-year participants reported low hope level scores. The data described in the paragraph above are outlined in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Demographic Characteristics of First-time, First-year Community College Students at Varying Levels of Demonstrated Hope: Educational Background of Participant

Demographic Characteristic: Educational Background of Participant	High Hope n (%)	High Hope \bar{x}	Medium Hope n (%)	Medium Hope \bar{x}	Low Hope n (%)	Low Hope \bar{x}
High School Graduate	109 (89%)	54	15 (88%)	41	0 (0%)	0
General Education Diploma Recipient	10 (8%)	50	2 (12%)	45	0 (0%)	0
Home Schooled	2 (2%)	57	0 (0%)	0	0 (0%)	0
Other	1 (1%)	57	0 (0%)	0	0 (0%)	0

Academic goal. Of the 122 first-time, first-year participants in the high hope level category, 86 (70%) identified that they plan to transfer to another institution after earning a degree or certificate with a mean hope level score of 54. Twelve (10%) plan to transfer to another institution without earning a degree or certificate with a mean hope level score of 56. Twenty-five (20%) of the first-time, first-year participants identified that they plan to seek employment after earning a degree or certificate with a mean hope level score of 54. Of the 17 first-time, first-year participants in the medium hope level category, 10

(59%) identified that they plan to transfer to another institution after earning a degree or certificate with a mean hope level score of 41. Seven (41%) of the first-time, first-year participants identified that they plan to seek employment after earning a degree or certificate with a mean hope level score of 40. None of the first-time, first-year participants reported low hope level scores. The data described in the paragraph above are outlined in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

Demographic Characteristics of First-time, First-year Community College Students at Varying Levels of Demonstrated Hope: Academic Goal

Demographic Characteristic: Academic Goal	High Hope n (%)	High Hope \bar{x}	Medium Hope n (%)	Medium Hope \bar{x}	Low Hope n (%)	Low Hope \bar{x}
Transfer after earning degree/certificate	86 (70%)	54	10 (59%)	41	0 (0%)	0
Transfer without earning degree/certificate	12 (10%)	56	0 (0%)	0	0 (0%)	0
Seek employment after earning degree/or certificate	25 (20%)	54	7 (41%)	40	0 (0%)	0

Academic major. The three most concentrated academic majors identified by the 122 first-time, first-year participants in the high hope level category included Liberal Arts, Nursing, and Pre-Nursing. Twenty (16%) of the first-time, first-year participants identified Liberal Arts as their academic major with a mean hope level score of 55. Eighteen (15%) of the first-time, first-year participants reported Nursing as their academic major and 19 (16%) reported Pre-Nursing as their academic major with mean hope level scores of 55 and 54, respectively. Similarly, the three most concentrated

academic majors identified by the 17 first-time, first-year participants in the medium hope level category also included Liberal Arts, Nursing, and Pre-Nursing. Three (18%) of the first-time, first-year participants identified Liberal Arts as their academic major with a mean hope level score of 40. Two (12%) of the first-time, first-year participants reported Nursing as their academic major and 3 (18%) reported Pre-Nursing as their academic major with mean hope level scores of 43 and 44, respectively. None of the first-time, first-year participants reported low hope level scores. The data described in the paragraph above are outlined in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8

Demographic Characteristics of First-time, First-year Community College Students at Varying Levels of Demonstrated Hope: Academic Major

Demographic Characteristic: Academic Major	High Hope n (%)	High Hope \bar{x}	Medium Hope n (%)	Medium Hope \bar{x}	Low Hope n (%)	Low Hope \bar{x}
Liberal Arts	20 (16%)	55	3 (18%)	40	0 (0%)	0
Nursing	18 (15%)	55	2 (12%)	43	0 (0%)	0
Pre-Nursing	16 (16%)	54	3 (18%)	44	0 (0%)	0

Enrollment status. In the high hope level category, 118 (97%) were enrolled full-time at the institution and 3 (3%) were enrolled part-time with mean hope level scores of 54 and 56, respectively. One participant did not identify enrollment status. Of the 17 first-time, first-year participants in the medium hope level category, 16 (94%) were enrolled full-time at the institution and 1 (6%) was enrolled part-time with mean hope level scores of 41 and 45, respectively. None of the first-time, first-year participants reported low hope level scores. Table 4.9 outlines the data described above.

Table 4.9

Demographic Characteristics of First-time, First-year Community College Students at Varying Levels of Demonstrated Hope: Enrollment Status

Demographic Characteristic: Enrollment Status	High Hope n (%)	High Hope \bar{x}	Medium Hope n (%)	Medium Hope \bar{x}	Low Hope n (%)	Low Hope \bar{x}
Full-time	118 (97%)	54	16 (94%)	41	0 (0%)	0
Part-time	3 (3%)	56	1 (6%)	45	0 (0%)	0

Developmental education course enrollment. Of the 122 first-time, first-year participants in the high hope level category, 17 (14%) were enrolled in Fundamental Math and Algebra Skills, a lower-level, non-credit bearing developmental education course, and 11 (9%) were enrolled in Intermediate Algebra, a higher-level, non-credit bearing developmental education course, with mean hope level scores of 53 and 54, respectively. Forty-four (36%) of the first-time, first-year participants were enrolled in Foundational Reading, a non-credit bearing developmental education course, and 56 (46%) were enrolled in Foundational Writing, a non-credit bearing developmental education course, both with mean hope level scores of 54. Forty-four (36%) of the first-time, first-year participants reported not being enrolled in any non-credit bearing developmental education courses with a mean hope level score of 54. Two participants did not provide a response.

Of the 17 first-time, first-year participants in the medium hope level category, 1 (6%) was enrolled in Intermediate Algebra, a higher-level, non-credit bearing developmental education course, with mean hope level score of 45. Seven (41%) of the first-time, first-year participants were enrolled in Foundational Reading, a non-credit

bearing developmental education course, and 8 (47%) were enrolled in Foundational Writing, a non-credit bearing developmental education course, with mean hope level scores of 42 and 41, respectively. Seven (41%) of the first-time, first-year participants reported not being enrolled in any non-credit bearing developmental education courses with a mean hope level score of 41. None of the first-time, first-year participants reported low hope level scores. The data described in the paragraphs above are outlined in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

Demographic Characteristics of First-time, First-year Community College Students at Varying Levels of Demonstrated Hope: Developmental Education Course Enrollment

Demographic Characteristic: Developmental Education Course Enrollment	High Hope n (%)	High Hope \bar{x}	Medium Hope n (%)	Medium Hope \bar{x}	Low Hope n (%)	Low Hope \bar{x}
Fundamental Math and Algebra Skills	17 (14%)	53	0 (0%)	0	0 (0%)	0
Intermediate Algebra	11 (9%)	54	1 (6%)	45	0 (0%)	0
Foundational Reading	44 (36%)	54	7 (41%)	42	0 (0%)	0
Foundational Writing	56 (46%)	54	8 (47%)	41	0 (0%)	0
No Developmental Education Courses	44 (36%)	54	7 (41%)	41	0 (0%)	0

Employment status. Of the 122 first-time, first-year participants in the high hope level category, 13 (11%) identified that they work full-time, 72 (59%) identified that they work part-time, and 37 (30%) identified that they were unemployed with mean hope level

scores of 52, 54, and 54 respectively. Of the 17 first-time, first-year participants in the medium hope level category, 1 (6%) identified that they work full-time, 8 (47%) identified that they work part-time, and 8 (47%) identified that they were unemployed with mean hope level scores of 31, 42, and 42 respectively. None of the first-time, first-year participants reported low hope level scores. The data described in the paragraph above are outlined in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11

Demographic Characteristics of First-time, First-year Community College Students at Varying Levels of Demonstrated Hope: Employment Status

Demographic Characteristic: Employment Status	High Hope n (%)	High Hope \bar{x}	Medium Hope n (%)	Medium Hope \bar{x}	Low Hope n (%)	Low Hope \bar{x}
Full-time	13 (11%)	52	1 (6%)	31	0 (0%)	0
Part-time	72 (59%)	54	8 (47%)	42	0 (0%)	0
Unemployed	37 (30%)	54	8 (47%)	42	0 (0%)	0

Chapter Summary

For the purpose of this study, the problem is that little is known about the hope level of students enrolled at community colleges. This study presents an initial examination of the characteristics of hope specifically in first-time, first-year students at a community college. In this chapter, the researcher presented the results of the current study. The data collected were analyzed in order to contribute to the existing literature on hope. The results will fill the existing gap in the literature regarding hope specifically community college students.

While only 12% of the first-time, first-year community college students surveyed in the current study report having a medium hope level, none of the participants in the

study report having a low hope level. The findings from this study suggest that first-time, first-year community college students are overwhelmingly hopeful (with 88% in the high hope level category) during their first semester of study. Additionally, the researcher reported the results from the analysis of the demographic characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of demonstrated hope. The demographic characteristics included: gender, age range, race/ethnicity, the highest level of schooling for both parents, previous education, first-time, first-year student status, enrollment status, major, academic goal, developmental education course enrollment, and employment status.

In the following chapter, the researcher will interpret the results of the study. The final chapter will include a discussion on the implications of the findings, and the researcher will address the limitations of the current study. The final chapter will conclude with recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this study, the researcher conducted an initial examination on the existence and characteristics of hope in first-time, first-year community college students at the beginning of the fall semester. The Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) was administered to each participant to assess hope level and a demographics sheet was used to collect demographic data. The researcher collected data from 139 first-time, first year students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at a community college in central New York State.

The results begin to fill the existing gap in the literature regarding hope specifically in first-time, first-year community college students. The results of the current study, as presented in the previous chapter, allow the researcher to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students during their first semester of study as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991)?
2. What are the demographic characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of demonstrated hope?

In this chapter, the researcher will outline the interpretation of the findings. This chapter will include a discussion on the implications of the findings, and the researcher will address the limitations of the current study. The chapter will conclude with

recommendations for future research and will include a summary conclusion of the study based on the analysis and results.

Implications of Findings

Seligman (2002) purports that hope is a tenant of positive psychology that can measure personal as well as academic performance, and prior research has shown that hope is linked to academic performance in students at middle schools, high schools, and at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions (Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002; Gallagher & Lopez, 2008; Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, & Lopez, 2011). More specifically, the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 suggested that a positive relationship exists between hope (measured at the onset of the pursuit of an academic goal) and academic performance in college students at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions (Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Snyder et al., 2002; Bressler, Bressler, & Bressler, 2010; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010). In fact, Lopez (2009) claims that “hope predicts GPA and retention in college, and hope scores are more robust than high school GPA, SAT, and ACT scores.” Thus, according to prior research, the higher the hope level of a student, the more successfully a student will perform academically.

Regarding Hope Level

Student retention at institutions of higher education, specifically at community colleges, is an ongoing problem for college and university faculty, staff, and administrators (Wild & Ebbers, 2002; Moltz, 2008; Adams, 2011). As mentioned previously, Lopez (2009) claims that “hope predicts GPA and retention in college, and hope scores are more robust than high school GPA, SAT, and ACT scores.” Because of

an open-access mission, community colleges tend to enroll a large number of academically underprepared students who are required to register for developmental education or remedial courses (McCabe, 2000). While approximately 33% of American college students are enrolled at community colleges, over 50% of those students are academically underprepared and are required to enroll in developmental or remedial education courses and programs when they enter the community college (Provasnik & Planty, 2008; Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010).

The results of this study provide an initial assessment of hope in first-time, first-year community college students during their first semester of study, which is a topic that is not explored extensively in the current literature regarding hope and academic performance. Community colleges assess the academic preparedness of new students prior to enrolling in courses to provide the necessary academic support services that can enrich the academic success of students who may be academically underprepared. In this study, the researcher explored the additional factor of hope in first-time, first-year students at the community college during the first semester of study to determine the percentage of students who have high, medium, and low levels of demonstrated hope. This researcher suggests that if hope can be used to measure academic potential (Seligman, 2002) and can predict grade point average and retention in college (Lopez, 2009), community colleges should invest in measuring the hope level, in addition to academic preparedness, of all new, incoming students and provide interventions to enhance the demonstrated level of hope for new students that may have lower levels of demonstrated hope, thereby enhancing academic performance and ultimate persistence and retention rates.

The results of this study indicate that the majority (88%) of the participants assessed for hope with the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) have a high hope level (hope level scores ranging from 46-64). The Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) was used to measure hope level of students in the sample. The twelve question, 8-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1-definitely false to 8-definitely true) survey includes four questions that measure agency (questions 2, 9, 10, and 12), four questions that measure pathways (1, 4, 6, and 8), and four filler questions (questions 3, 5, 7, and 11). The scale identifies separate yet related agency and pathways results as well as an overall hope level.

The hope level of each participant could range from 8 to 64 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), with 8 being the lowest possible score and 64 being the highest possible score. Participants that score between 46 and 64 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) are identified as having a high hope level. Participants that score between 27 and 45 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) are identified as having a medium hope level. Participants that score between 8 and 26 on the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) are identified as having a low hope level.

Prior studies involving college students at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions (as mentioned previously in Chapter 2) provided differing results. While 88% of the participants in this study were reported as having high hope levels, the results of previous studies on college student samples at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions indicate that 56% of the participants in a study by Chang (1998) were categorized as having a high hope level and only 34% of the participants in a study by Gustafsson, Hassmen, and Podlog (2010) were categorized as having high hope levels. In a similar study that measured hope specifically in first-year college students enrolled

in Introduction to Psychology courses at a four-year baccalaureate degree granting institution at the beginning of the semester, Snyder et al. (2002) reported that only 33% of the participants in the study had high hope level scores.

The finding that 88% of the first-time, first-year community college students surveyed have high hope levels means that they actively pursue the goals that they set for themselves and that they are able to more easily take an alternate pathway to reach their goals should a hurdle cause a barrier. While only 12% of the first-time, first-year community college students surveyed in this study report having a medium hope level, none of the participants in this study report having a low hope level. Results in previous studies reported a more varied distribution of participants across the three hope level categories, high, medium, and low (Chang, 1998; Snyder et al., 2002; Gustafsson, Hassmen, & Podlog, 2010).

As mentioned previously, Snyder defines hope as the “sum of perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes” (Snyder, 2000, p. 8). The three core elements of Snyder’s Hope Theory include the conceptualization of a goal, the developed routes to obtain the goal (pathways), and the motivation to obtain the conceptualized goal (agency). Hope thought is a “cognitive phenomena that is the summative result of pathways thought plus agency thought” (Snyder, 2000, p. 10; Snyder & Lopez, 2006, pp. 188-192). What the findings of the current study suggest is that first-time, first-year community college students do, indeed, have the agency thoughts and pathways thoughts to achieve their desired goals.

The question remains then, if hope is positively linked with academic performance (as so many researchers have suggested) and community college students

are hopeful, why is student persistence, retention, and ultimate completion such a current issue and frequent topic of conversation among community college faculty, staff, and administrators? Also, since hope was measured in first-time, first-year community college students during the first month of the fall semester in this study, does hope change over time for community college students?

Regarding Demographic Characteristics

While the results of the current study indicate that the majority (88%) of the first-time, first-year community college students assessed for hope level with the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) have a high hope level (hope level scores ranging from 46-64), the demographic data collected provides findings that require further exploration. None of the first-time, first-year community college students surveyed with the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) have a low hope level (hope level scores ranging from 8-26), yet 12% of those surveyed have medium hope level scores (ranging from 27-45).

In this study, the females outnumber the males in both categories (high hope level and medium hope level), and there is not much difference (only one hope level score) between the mean hope level scores for the males (55) and the females (54) in the high hope level category. The majority of the participants in the high hope level category are between the ages of 18 and 23 (91%). The sample in this study is similar to the samples in previous studies at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions (reviewed in Chapter 2) in terms of gender and age range because the samples contained more females and more students of traditional age. Additionally, while previous studies did not all report on the race and ethnicity and enrollment status of the students in the sample, in this study the majority of the participants in the high hope level category are White/Caucasian

(85%) and are enrolled full-time at the institution (97%).

Schooling of parents. Based on the analysis of the demographic data, while the participants are all described as being in the high hope level category, the mean hope level scores are higher for the participants whose father's and mother's highest level of schooling was identified as college or beyond than the other options of middle school/junior high and high school. This finding suggests that college (or beyond) educated parents are more likely to inspire hope in their children over those parents who have not completed a college degree.

Educational background of participant. Another finding based on the analysis of the demographic data is that, while the participants are all described as being in the high hope level category, the mean hope level scores for the participants who self-identified as general education diploma recipients are lower than the other options of high school graduate or home schooled. This finding suggests that students who are high school graduates or are home schooled are more hopeful than those who receive a general education diploma.

Academic goal. Based on the data analysis for the academic goals of the participants in the high hope level category, the results suggest that while the majority of those surveyed plan to transfer to another institution after they earn a degree or certificate from the current institution, those students who plan to transfer to another institution without earning a degree or certificate from the current institution have a higher mean hope level score. This suggests that first-time, first-year students who plan to transfer to another institution without earning a degree or certificate see their current academic goal as a shorter pathway along a larger pathway to reach the larger academic goal of

completion at another institution.

On the other hand, although only 17 of the participants were classified into the medium hope level category, none of the medium hope level first-time, first-year community college students identified that they plan to transfer to another institution without earning a degree or certificate from the current institution. The 17 medium hope level participants are distributed evenly between transferring to another institution and seeking employment after earning a degree. The participants with the higher mean hope levels plan to pursue their goals without earning a degree or certificate (without a reward), while all participants with the medium hope level scores plan to pursue their goals after they earn a degree or certificate (with a reward).

Developmental education course enrollment. In terms of course enrollment in developmental education courses at the institution, the findings suggest no difference in the mean hope level scores for first-time, first-year community college students in the high hope level category. This finding is consistent with the participants in the medium hope level category as well. This suggests that there is little difference in hope level between first-time, first-year community college students that are enrolled in developmental education courses during the first semester of study when compared to first-time, first-year community college students who are not enrolled in developmental education courses during the first year of study.

Employment status. The results of the demographic data analysis focused on employment status suggest that, in high hope level category, first-time, first-year community college students who are employed full-time have lower mean hope levels compared to those who work part-time or are unemployed. The data states that first-time,

first-year community college students with part-time jobs or who are unemployed tend to be more hopeful than those first-time, first-year community college students who are employed with full-time jobs. This finding suggests that first-time, first-year community college students who work part-time or who are unemployed may pursue their goals more aggressively because their ultimate goal might be to obtain a full-time job in the future.

Limitations

This study was limited by three main factors, each which makes the generalization of the findings difficult. The first limitation was the data collection method. Like the studies conducted at the four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions reviewed in Chapter 2, the researcher collected data from participants enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at the institution which yielded responses from only 139 first-time, first-year students. This was a limiting factor because, while the target population for this study was first-time, first-year community college students, a more robust response rate might have been obtained if the researcher collected data specifically from new students prior to the start of the semester at a formal program geared for new students (like summer orientation) where there likely would have been a heavier concentration of first-time, first-year students.

Another limitation was the fact that the study was conducted with one student population at one institution. Even though data were collected from four campus center sites, the fact that the majority of the participants self-identified as White/Caucasian does not allow for the generalization of hope level in first-time, first-year community college students that self-identify with other races and ethnicities. The addition of multiple institutions in the study might have more successfully diversified the participants in the

sample in terms of race and ethnicity.

A third limitation was that the researcher did not keep separate the data collected from participants in the varying Introduction to Psychology course sections. For example, the researcher was not able to distinguish the level of demonstrated hope for first-time, first-year community college students who attend classes in the evenings or on weekends. Similarly, the researcher was not able to distinguish the level of demonstrated hope for first-time, first-year community college students who attend classes at one particular campus center compared to another.

Recommendations

Based on the review of the literature and the findings of this study, the recommendations of the researcher are framed by the research questions that guide the study and are then listed in this section of the chapter. The results of this study, as presented in Chapter 4, allowed the researcher to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students during their first semester of study as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991)?
2. What are the demographic characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of demonstrated hope?

Research Question One: Hope Level

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 suggested that a positive relationship exists between hope and academic performance in college students at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions (Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby,

& Rehm, 1997; Snyder et al., 2002; Bressler, Bressler, & Bressler, 2010; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010). In fact, Lopez (2009) claims that “hope predicts GPA and retention in college, and hope scores are more robust than high school GPA, SAT, and ACT scores.”

While 88% of the participants in this study were reported as having high hope levels, the results of previous studies on college student samples at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions indicate that 56% of the participants in a study by Chang (1998) were categorized as having a high hope level and only 34% of the participants in a study by Gustafsson, Hassmen, and Podlog (2010) were categorized as having high hope levels. In a similar study that measured hope specifically in first-year college students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at a four-year baccalaureate degree granting institution at the beginning of the semester, Snyder et al. (2002) reported that only 33% of the participants in the study had high hope level scores.

The finding that 88% of the first-time, first-year community college students surveyed have high hope levels means that they actively pursue the goals that they set for themselves and that they are able to more easily take an alternate pathway to reach their goals should a hurdle cause a barrier. While only 12% of the first-time, first-year community college students surveyed in this study report having a medium hope level, none of the participants in this study report having a low hope level. Results in previous studies reported a more varied distribution of participants across the three hope level categories, high, medium, and low (Chang, 1998; Snyder et al., 2002; Gustafsson, Hassmen, & Podlog, 2010).

While individuals with high hope levels are more aptly able to pursue alternate

pathways when they encounter hurdles along the journey to a goal, the findings of this study have implications that may lead to a new perspective regarding student persistence, retention, and ultimate completion for community colleges. What this means is that if first-time, first-year students are beginning their studies at community colleges with high hope levels, it may be necessary for community colleges to intentionally learn more about the specific agency, pathway, and goals of the students enrolled at their institutions. Much like a consumer who has a bad experience at a popular coffee shop, the reality is that other popular coffee shops exist where consumers can get a cup of coffee (alternate pathways to take to reach the ultimate goal). Similarly, when a high hope level, first-time, first-year student has a bad experience (hits a hurdle) at a particular community college, the reality is that other community colleges (and institutions of higher education for that matter) exist that can serve as an alternate pathway to an academic goal. This has implications on retention for institutions, because students with high levels of hope that encounter hurdles at one institution may persist toward the intended goals at other institutions (thereby having a negative impact on the retention and ultimate completion rates at the original institution).

The researcher recommends that the faculty, staff, and administration at community colleges use the framework of Snyder's Hope Theory to examine the reasons why students may not be persisting from semester to semester, retained from year to year, or completing their academic goals while enrolled at respective institutions. Given that the majority of the first-time, first-year community college students in this study had high hope levels, the following questions remain and warrant further study:

1. Does hope level change over the course of time in community college students?
2. What hurdles are preventing students from obtaining their academic goals at respective institutions?
3. What are other institutions doing to attract high hope level students who encounter hurdles at our institutions, leave us, and enroll there?

Research Question Two: Demographic Characteristics

While the current study yielded responses from first-time, first-year community college students who have high hope levels, are primarily between the ages of 18 and 23, mostly White/Caucasian, and largely enrolled full-time in courses at the institution, future research is warranted to further explore the hope level in first-time, first-year community college students based on some of the other demographic characteristics presented in the current study. Future studies could be conducted to further examine the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students focusing on participants from different age range groups, from more racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds, enrolled in online degree programs in courses, or from other community colleges with different demographics. While this study provides a snapshot of hope in first-time, first-year community college students at the beginning of their respective academic journeys, additional studies could focus on the hope of specific groups of students over time.

The data in the current study suggests that first-time, first-year community college students with college (or beyond) educated parents have higher mean Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). Therefore, more research is necessary to examine the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students in relation to the schooling and

encouragement of their parents. The data in the current study also suggests that first-time, first-year community college students who are high school graduates or are home schooled are more hopeful than those who receive a general education diploma. Therefore, another area of focus that deserves further examination is the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students in relation to their educational background upon enrolling at the community college. Similarly, the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students in relation to their academic goal is another topic for deeper study; the current study suggests that that first-time, first-year students community college students who plan to transfer to another institution without earning a degree or certificate see their current academic goal as a shorter pathway along a larger pathway to reach the larger academic goal of completion at another institution. Finally, the results of the current study suggest that first-time, first year community college students who work part-time or who are unemployed might pursue their goals more aggressively because their ultimate goal might be to obtain a full-time job in the future. Additional research, therefore, on the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students in relation to their employment status is an area that necessitates further examination.

The researcher recommends that future studies assess hope level using the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) when students attend new student orientation to collect hope level data from as many first-time, first-year community college students as possible prior to the start of the semester. In addition, to obtain a larger perspective, the researcher recommends that future studies assess hope level in community college students using the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) at more than one institution in order to collect richer,

more robust data. This would allow for the assessment of hope level in community college students from more racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. Additionally, while the results of this study provide an initial examination of hope in first-time, first-year community college, further research is warranted on the lasting effect of hope on the academic performance of these students as they persist throughout their college careers.

The studies reviewed in Chapter 2 all used a quantitative design to approach the research. The researcher recommends that more qualitative, explanatory studies be conducted to create further understanding about the characteristics of hope and specific tenets of hope (agency, pathways, goals) in first-time, first-year community college students. For example, given the current study, a qualitative, explanatory study could be conducted to further examine the previously mentioned phenomenon regarding the academic goal of first-time, first-year community college students. The implications of such a study could be helpful for community college faculty, staff, and administrators in determining what motivates a student to pursue the desired academic goal and identifying the hurdles that may present themselves along the pathway to the desired academic goal.

List of Recommendations

1. Faculty, staff, and administration at community colleges should use the framework of Snyder's Hope Theory (pathways, agency, goals) to examine the specific reasons why students may not be persisting from semester to semester, retained from year to year, or completing their academic goals while enrolled at respective institutions.
2. Future research is warranted to determine if hope level changes over the course of time in community college students.

3. Future research is warranted to examine the specific hurdles that are preventing students from obtaining their academic goals at respective institutions.
4. Examine what other institutions are doing to attract high hope level students who encounter hurdles at our institutions, leave us, and enroll there.
5. Qualitative research is warranted to further examine hope in first-time, first year community college students based on specific demographic characteristics.
6. Future studies could focus on the hope of specific groups of students over time.
7. Further research is warranted on the lasting effect of hope on the academic performance of community college students as they persist throughout their college careers.
8. More research is necessary to examine the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students in relation to the schooling and encouragement of their parents.
9. Another area of focus that deserves further examination is the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students in relation to their educational background upon enrolling at the community college.
10. The hope level of first-time, first-year community college students in relation to their academic goal is another topic for deeper study.

11. Additional research on the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students in relation to their employment status is an area that necessitates further examination.
12. The researcher recommends that future studies assess hope level using the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) when students attend new student orientation to collect hope level data from as many first-time, first-year community college students as possible prior to the start of the semester.
13. To obtain a larger perspective, the researcher recommends that future studies assess hope level in community college students using the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) at more than one institution in order to collect richer, more robust data.
14. The researcher recommends that more qualitative, explanatory studies be conducted to create further understanding about the characteristics of hope and specific tenets of hope (agency, pathways, goals) in first-time, first-year community college students.

Conclusion

Snyder's Hope Theory defines the construct of hope as the "sum of perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes" (Snyder, 2000, p. 8). As stated in this study, the development of the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) in 1991 has provided researchers a measurement instrument to assess an individual's hope level, a psychological construct that has since received a sparse yet consistent place in the research literature. With a presence in the field of positive psychology, researchers have measured the hope level of individuals through studies that focus on hope as the primary variable of examination.

While research indicates that significant, positive relationships exist between Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) scores and other constructs of positive psychology such as self-worth (Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, & Lopez, 2009) and optimism (Snyder et al. 1997; Gallagher & Lopez, 2009), Seligman (2002) reports that hope is a tenant of positive psychology that can be used to measure personal as well as academic performance. The majority of the existing studies on the relationship between hope level and academic performance focus primarily on middle school students, high school students, and first-year, undergraduate college students at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting intuitions, and little is known about hope in students at community colleges. In fact, the review of the literature in this study yielded only two studies that examined hope level and academic performance in community college students (Savage & Smith, 2008; Rudmann, Tucker, & Gonzalez, 2008).

The literature reviewed in this study highlighted research studies that examined the relationship between hope level and academic performance in college students at four year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions (Anderson, 1988; Harney, 1989; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Snyder et al., 2002; Bressler, Bressler, & Bressler, 2010; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010). Additional studies were reviewed that categorized participants by varying levels of demonstrated hope as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), or its variation such as the Children's Hope Scale (Snyder, Hoza et al., 1997). Few studies delineate specifically exactly how many participants in the respective samples are categorized as having high, medium, or low hope levels (Chang, 1998; Snyder et al., 2002; Gustafsson, Hassmen, & Podlog, 2010).

Student retention at institutions of higher education, specifically at community

colleges, is an ongoing problem for college and university faculty, staff, and administrators (Wild & Ebbers, 2002; Moltz, 2008; Adams, 2011). As mentioned previously, Lopez (2009) claims that “hope predicts GPA and retention in college, and hope scores are more robust than high school GPA, SAT, and ACT scores.” Because of an open-access mission, community colleges tend to enroll a large number of academically underprepared students who are required to register for developmental education or remedial courses (McCabe, 2000). While approximately 33% of American college students are enrolled at community colleges, over 50% of those students are academically underprepared and are required to enroll in developmental or remedial education courses and programs when they enter the community college (Provasnik & Planty, 2008; Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010).

Research is warranted to explore hope level in community college students. Because such a large number of college students in the United States enroll in coursework at community colleges, and because the review of the literature in this study supports that hope is related to academic performance in first-year, undergraduate students enrolled in four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions, this study fills an existing gap in the literature and created understanding regarding hope specifically in first-time, first-year students at a community college.

The analysis of the data collected allowed the researcher to answer both research questions that guided the study. To answer the first question regarding the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students during their semester of study, the researcher used the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) to assess hope. Given these results, the researcher was able to then answer the second research question regarding the

demographic characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of demonstrated hope.

While only 12% of the first-time, first-year community college students surveyed in the current study report having a medium hope level, none of the participants in the study report having a low hope level. The findings from this study suggest that first-time, first-year community college students are overwhelmingly hopeful (with 88% in the high hope level category) during their first semester of study. Additionally, the researcher reported the results from the analysis of the demographic characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of demonstrated hope. The demographic characteristics included: gender, age range, race/ethnicity, the highest level of schooling for both parents, previous education, first-time, first-year student status, enrollment status, major, academic goal, developmental education course enrollment, and employment status.

In this study, the females outnumber the males in both categories (high hope level and medium hope level), and there is not much difference (only one hope level score) between the mean hope level scores for the males (55) and the females (54) in the high hope level category. The majority of the participants in the high hope level category are between the ages of 18 and 23 (91%). Also, the majority of the participants in the high hope level category were White/Caucasian (85%) and were enrolled full-time at the institution (97%).

Prior research has shown that hope is linked to academic performance in students at middle schools, high schools, and at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions (Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon,

2002; Gallagher & Lopez, 2008; Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, & Lopez, 2011). This study is significant because the researcher proposes assessing the hope level of first-time, first-year students at a community college during their first semester of study, which is a practice that is not widespread in the literature.

Community colleges assess the academic preparedness of new students prior to enrolling in courses to provide the necessary academic support services that can enrich the academic success of students who are academically underprepared. The researcher explored the additional factor of hope level of first-time, first-year students at the community college during the first semester of study to determine the percentage of students who have high, medium, and low hope levels. It is the belief of the researcher that if hope can be used to measure academic potential (Seligman, 2002) and can predict grade point average and retention in college (Lopez, 2009), community colleges should invest in measuring the hope level, in addition to academic preparedness, of all new incoming students and provide interventions to increase the hope levels of new students thereby enhancing their academic performance and ultimate persistence, retention and completion rates.

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Appendix A

Hope Scale

Instructions: 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. = Somewhat False

4. = Slightly False

5. = Slightly True

6. = Somewhat True

7. = Mostly True

8. = Definitely True

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

Appendix B

Permission to Use Hope Scale

E-mail message to **Dr. Shane Lopez** (shane@strengths.org) on 11/26/2011:

“Dr. Lopez:

I am working on a Doctor of Education degree (in Executive Leadership) at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, NY. My plan is to research hope in community college students. Having come across your name numerous times in my review of the literature and because you have worked directly with Dr. Snyder in the past, I wonder if you could guide me to the current contact information of the person or organization that grants permission to use Dr. Snyder's Hope Scale? I would like to use the tool for my study.

Any guidance you can provide will be most appreciated.

You can e-mail me directly at tcp04098@sjfc.edu.

Many thanks.

*Sincerely,
TCP*

Thomas Christopher Priester, Student

*Doctor of Education in Executive Leadership
St. John Fisher College
FOCUS * MAXIMIZER * FUTURISTIC * STRATEGIC * COMPETITION”*

Reply from **Dr. Shane Lopez** (shane@strengths.org) on 11/28/2011:

“thomas, dr. snyder left his scales in the public domain. shane”

Appendix C

Demographics Sheet

Instructions: For the following items, please fill in the blank as appropriate or place X on the box by the response that is most descriptive of you. The information collected will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this study.

1. Gender: _____
2. Age Range: 18-23 24-29 30 and above
3. Race/Ethnicity: (select all that apply to you)
 American Indian/Alaska Native Asian/Pacific Islander Black/African America
 Hispanic/Latino White/Caucasian Other: _____
4. **Highest school your father completed:**
 Middle school/Jr. high College or beyond High school Other/unknown
Highest school your mother completed:
 Middle school/Jr. high College or beyond High school Other/unknown
5. Which of the following best describes you:
 High School Graduate (Indicate year: _____)
 GED (General Education Diploma) Recipient (Indicate year: _____)
 Home Schooled (Indicate year: _____)
 Other (Describe: _____)
6. Not counting credit-bearing college courses taken in high school/home school, have you ever been enrolled in college before this semester? Yes No
7. Current Enrollment Status:
 Full-Time (12 credit hours or more) Part-Time (11 credit house or less)
8. Major(s): _____
9. Current Academic Goal:
 To transfer to another institution after I earn a degree/certificate from FLCC
 To transfer to another institution without earning a degree/certificate from FLCC
 To seek employment after I earn a degree/certificate from FLCC
 I do not plan to earn a degree/certificate from FLCC
10. Which courses are you currently enrolled in (X all that apply to you)?
 DST 042-Fundamental Math and Algebra Skills DST 043-Intermediate Algebra
 DST 092-Foundational Reading DST 095-Foundational Writing None of the above
11. Current Employment Status: Full-time Part-Time Unemployed

Appendix D

Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: Hopeful Measures: Characteristics of Hope at a Community College

Name of researcher: Thomas C. Priester

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Mary S. Collins

Phone for further information: [REDACTED]

Purpose of study: The purpose of this study is to present an initial examination on the characteristics of hope for students at a community college. The data collected will be analyzed in an effort to contribute to the existing literature on hope. This study will fill the existing gap in the literature regarding hope in students at a community college.

Approval of study: This study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Boards at both St. John Fisher College and [REDACTED].

Place of study: [REDACTED]

Procedure: Participants of this study will complete a self-report demographics sheet (to capture demographic data) and a self-report survey instrument called the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) (to capture hope level data). The data will be collected in Introduction to Psychology classes at Finger Lakes Community College during the month of September. Data will be analyzed to determine the hope level of each participant and the relationships between demographic characteristics and demonstrated hope level of the participants.

Risks and benefits: No risks to participants are expected as a result of this study.

Community colleges assess the academic preparedness of new students prior to enrolling in courses to provide the necessary academic support services that can enrich the academic success of students who are academically underprepared. This researcher intends to explore the additional factor of hope level of first-time, first-year students at the community college during the first semester of study to determine the percentage of students who have high, medium, and low hope levels. It is the belief of this researcher that if hope can be used to measure academic performance (Seligman, 2002) and can predict grade point average and retention in college (Lopez, 2009), community colleges should measure the hope level, in addition to academic preparedness, of all new incoming students and provide interventions to increase the hope levels of new students thereby enhancing their academic performance and ultimate persistence and retention rates.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy: The researcher will hold in the strictest confidence all materials collected from the participants. All data will be aggregated and no individual participants will be identified in the presentation of results. The researcher will have no relationship to any of the participants and the classroom instructors will not

be permitted to view individual results. The information collected will be kept confidential and will only be used by the researcher for the purpose of this study.

Your rights: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your course grade will in no way be impacted should you choose not to participate in this study.

As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedure or courses of treatment, if any, that may be advantageous to you.
5. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read to above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study. By signing below I confirm that I am at least 18 years of age.

_____	_____	_____
Print name (Participant)	Signature	Date
Thomas C. Priester	_____	_____
Print name (Investigator)	Signature	Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above via electronic mail message at tcp04098@sjfc.edu. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, contact the St. John Fisher College Office of Academic Affairs at (585) 385-8034 or the St. John Fisher College Wellness Center at (585) 385-8280 for appropriate referrals.

Appendix E

St. John Fisher College
Institutional Review Board

For Office Use Only

Chair, Signature

Date

Application for Expedited Review

Please submit **three (3)** copies of this form to the Office of Academic Affairs, K-202, Attention: Jamie Mosca.

Name of Investigator(s): Thomas C. Priester

Address/City/State/Zip: [REDACTED]

Telephone: **Day:** [REDACTED] **Evening:** [REDACTED]

E-mail Address: tcp04098@sjfc.edu **Fax:** None

Faculty/Staff Sponsor name/email address (if different):

Dr. Mary S. Collins/mscollins@sjfc.edu (Chairperson)

Dr. Gerard Rooney/grooney@sjfc.edu (Committee Member)

Title of Project: Hopeful Measures: Characteristics of Hope at a Community College

Abstract of Project: Seligman (2002) purports that hope is a tenant of positive psychology that can measure personal as well as academic performance, and prior research has shown that hope is linked to academic performance in students at middle schools, high schools, and at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions (Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002; Gallagher & Lopez, 2008; Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, & Lopez, 2011). In fact, Lopez (2009) claims that “hope predicts GPA and retention in college, and hope scores are more robust than high school GPA, SAT, and ACT scores.”

For the purpose of this study, the problem is that little is known about the hope level of students at community colleges. This study will present an initial examination on the characteristics of hope for students at a community college. The data collected will be analyzed in an effort to contribute to the existing literature on hope. This study will fill the existing gap in the literature regarding hope in students at a community college.

The results of this study will allow the researcher to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What is the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students during their first semester of study as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991)?
- 2) What are the demographic characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of demonstrated hope?

Type of Investigator and Nature of Activity (check one):

- Faculty or staff at St. John Fisher College _____
- Student of St. John Fisher College ✓

Individuals other than faculty, staff, or students of St. John Fisher College. (Please identify investigator and explain nature of research activity.) *All applications from students and from persons outside of the College must be signed by the faculty, staff person or administrator supervising the research activity* N/A

Please answer the following questions with regard to the proposed research activity. (An affirmative response to any of these might necessitate formal review.)

Does the research involve:

YES NO

a. Drugs or other controlled substances _____ ✓

b. Access to subjects through a cooperating institution? ✓

**Subjects will be students enrolled at [REDACTED]. A separate Application for Expedited Review will submitted to the Institutional Review Board [REDACTED].*

c. Subjects taking internally or having externally applied any substance? _____ ✓

d. Removing any fluids (e.g., blood) or tissue from subjects? _____ ✓

e. Subjects experiencing stress (physiological or psychological) above a level that would be associated with their normal everyday activity? _____ ✓

f. Misleading subjects about any aspect of the research? _____ ✓

g. Subjects who would be judged to have limited freedom of consent (e.g., minors, mentally retarded, aged)? _____ ✓

h. Any procedures or activities that might place the subjects at more than **minimal risk** (psychological, physical, or social/economic)? _____ ✓

i. Sensitive aspects of the persons' own behavior, such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or alcohol use? _____ ✓

Under which of the following categories are applying for expedited review? (check one)

_____ (1) Voice recordings made for research purposes such as investigations of speech defects.

_____ (2) Moderate exercise by healthy volunteers.

_____ (3) The study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if the individual from whom the data were collected are identifiable.

✓ _____ (4) Research on individual or group behavior or characteristics of individuals, such as studies of perception, cognition, game theory, or test development, where the investigator does not manipulate subjects' behavior and the research will not involve stress to subjects.

_____ (5) Collection of: hair and nail clippings, in a non-disfiguring manner; deciduous teeth; and permanent teeth if patient care indicates a need for extraction.

_____ (6) Collection of excreta and external secretions including sweat, uncannulated saliva, placenta removed at delivery, and amniotic fluid at that time of rupture of the membrane prior to or during labor.

_____ (7) Recording of data collected from subjects 18 years of age or older in the course noninvasive procedures routinely employed by professionally certified/licensed individuals in the clinical practice of medicine, psychology and social work. This includes the use of physical practice sensors that are applied either to the surface of the body or at a distance and do not involve input of matter or significant amounts of energy into the subject or an invasion of the subject's privacy. It also includes such procedures as weighing, testing sensory acuity, electrocardiography, electro-encephalography, thermography, detection of naturally occurring radioactivity, diagnostic echography, and electroretinography. It does not include exposure to electromagnetic radiation outside the visible range (for example x-rays, microwaves).

_____ (8) Collection of blood samples by venipuncture, in amounts not exceeding 450 milliliters in an eight week period and no more often than two times per week, from subjects 18 years of age or older who are in good health and not pregnant.

_____ (9) Collection of both supra- and subgingival dental plaque and calculus, provided the procedure is not more invasive than routine prophylactic scaling of the teeth and the process is accomplished in

Certification

1. I am familiar with the policies and procedures of St. John Fisher College regarding human subjects. I subscribe to the standards described in the document, IRB Policies and Procedures for the Protection of Human Subjects.
2. I am familiar with the published guidelines for the ethical treatment of subjects associated with my particular field of inquiry (e.g., as published by the American Psychological Association, American Sociological Association).
3. I am familiar with and will adhere to any official policies in my department concerning research with human subjects.
4. I understand that upon consideration of the nature of my project, the IRB may request a full application for review of my research at their discretion and convenience.
5. If changes in procedures involving human subjects become necessary, I will submit these changes for review before initiating the changes.

Date & Signature - Investigator(s) Date & Signature - Collaborator(s) and/or Student Investigator

Date & Signature – Faculty/Staff Sponsor

All student applications and applicants from outside the College must have a College sponsor.

Date & Signature – Researcher

Introduction

Seligman (2002) purports that hope is a tenant of positive psychology that can measure personal as well as academic performance, and prior research has shown that hope is linked to academic performance in students at middle schools, high schools, and at four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions (Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002; Gallagher & Lopez, 2008; Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, & Lopez, 2011). In fact, Lopez (2009) claims that “hope predicts GPA and retention in college, and hope scores are more robust than high school GPA, SAT, and ACT scores.”

Purpose

For the purpose of this study, the problem is that little is known about the hope level of students at community colleges. This study will present an initial examination on the characteristics of hope for students at a community college. The data collected will be analyzed in an effort to contribute to the existing literature on hope. This study will fill the existing gap in the literature regarding hope in students at a community college.

The results of this study will allow the researcher to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What is the hope level of first-time, first-year community college students during their first semester of study as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991)?
- 2) What are the demographic characteristics of first-time, first-year community college students at varying levels of demonstrated hope?

Methodology

The researcher will use quantitative methods to answer the research questions. Participants will complete a self-report demographics sheet (to capture demographic data) and a self-report survey instrument called the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) (to capture hope level data). The data will be collected in Introduction to Psychology classes at [REDACTED] during the month of September. Data will be analyzed using SPSS to determine the hope level of each participant and the relationships between demographic characteristics and demonstrated hope level of the participants.

Sample

For the purpose of this study, the convenience sample includes first-time, first-year community college students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology at [REDACTED] during the fall semester of 2012. During the fall semester of 2012, the institution is offering 26 sections of Introduction to Psychology at four physical campus centers. The total number of potential participants in the study equals approximately 650.

Classroom instructors will administer to the students enrolled in their respective Introduction to Psychology courses the research packet which will contain the consent form, the demographics sheet, and the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). Each classroom instructor will receive enough research packets for each student enrolled in each of their Introduction to Psychology courses and will be given a script to read to the students prior to administering the research instruments. The script will provide consistency throughout the administration of the data collection because each classroom instructor will read the same directions to the students. Once the directions on the script have been presented by the classroom instructor, the classroom instructor will distribute the research packets to the students to be completely filled out. Once filled out, the classroom instructor will collect the completed research packets and submit them to the main office of the department of social sciences from where the researcher will retrieve the completed packets.

For the purpose of this study, only the data collected from consenting participants over the age of 18 who are also first-time, first-year students at the institution will be used. The researcher will hold in the strictest confidence all materials collected from the participants. All data will be aggregated and no individual participants will be identified in the presentation of results. The researcher will have no relationship to any of the participants and the classroom instructor will not be permitted to view individual results. The information collected will be kept confidential and will only be used by the researcher for the purpose of this study.

Dissemination

The findings generated from this study will be presented at conferences and will be submitted for publishing.

Disposition of Data

If requested, an abstract of the study will be sent to research participants. The researcher will hold in the strictest confidence all materials collected from the participants. All data will be aggregated and no individual participants will be identified in the presentation of results. The researcher will have no relationship to any of the participants and the classroom instructor will not be permitted to view individual results. The information collected will be kept confidential and will only be used by the researcher for the purpose of this study. The data collected will be held securely by the

researcher under lock and key for the entire duration of the study. The Office for Human Research Protections requires research records to be retained for at least 3 years after the completion of the research.

Consent Form

See attached *Informed Consent Form*

Copies of Data Collection Tools

See attached *Demographics Sheet* and *Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991)*. Additionally, an electronic mail message from Dr. Shane Lopez, of the Gallup Organization, is attached confirming that the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) is available to use as it is in the public domain.

Letter of Introduction to the Participants

See attached *Classroom Instructor Script*

References

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Appendix F

Classroom Instructor Script

Colleague: Thank you for your assistance in the data collection process of this study. This envelop contains research packets that consist of a consent form, a demographics sheet, and a Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991).

Please distribute one research packet per individual student in your Introduction to Psychology courses and read, verbatim, the following instructions to students when administering the research packet in your classroom. Upon student completion of the forms, please collect all forms, place them back in the envelope, seal the envelope, and return the envelope to the main office of the Department of Social Sciences.

Thomas C. Priester, a doctoral candidate at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, NY, invites you to participate in a research study on the characterization of hope in students at a community college. This study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Boards at both St. John Fisher College and [REDACTED].

The purpose of this study is to present an initial examination on the characteristics of hope for students at a community college. The data collected will be analyzed in an effort to contribute to the existing literature on hope. This study will fill the existing gap in the literature regarding hope in students at a community college.

This study requires participants to fill out a research packet that includes a consent form, a demographics sheet, and a Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). This process should take no longer than 10 minutes.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your course grade will in no way be impacted should you choose not to participate in this study.

As a research participant, you must be at least 18 years of age and you have the right to:

- 1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.*
- 2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.*
- 3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.*
- 4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedure or courses of treatment, if any, that may be advantageous to you.*
- 5. Be informed of the results of the study.*

The researcher will hold in the strictest confidence all materials collected from the participants. All data will be aggregated and no individual participants will be identified in the presentation of results. The researcher will have no relationship to any of the

participants and I (as the classroom instructor) am not permitted to view individual results. The information collected will be kept confidential and will only be used by the researcher for the purpose of this study.

Please print legibly and return your completed research packet to me. I will collect them all in an envelope and will return them to the main office of the Department of Social Sciences from where the researcher will retrieve them. Thank you for your participation.