Hope has been described by numerous philosophers, theologians, educators, and scientists over the years. While there are many different definitions of hope, it can generally be thought of as a positive mental state about the ability to achieve goals in the future. Since the late 1900s social scientists have attempted to describe, measure, and study hope in various ways, and this construct has been conceptualized as expectations or feelings about goals and the future. Some conceptions of hope view the construct as an emotion that allows individuals to sustain belief during challenging times. While popular literature has generally portrayed this affective view of hope, most research has been conducted about models of hope that are more cognitive in nature. For example, Averill and colleagues described hope as an emotion that was guided by cognitions and influenced by environmental conditions. Stotland and Gottschalk each described hope as expectancies about reaching goals, with Stotland emphasizing the importance and probability of achieving goals, and Gottschalk describing a positive force that propels individuals to work through difficult circumstances. Similarly, Staats viewed hope as an expectancy which interacts with wishes to weigh the possibility and affect connected to the achievement of goals. The theory of hope developed by C. R. Snyder and his colleagues over the past 20 years has received much attention both within and outside the field of psychology. In his seminal book, The Psychology of Hope, published in 1994, Snyder outlined his theory and early research efforts to understand hope more fully. Similar to previous theories, this conceptualization of hope is primarily cognitive in nature, though the theory evolved to include emotions as well. Snyder and colleagues described hope as a motivational state based on goals, pathways, and agency goal directed thinking. Snyder proposes that goals are the targets of mental action and that in order to necessitate hope goals need to be sufficiently important to individuals. Furthermore, goals must fall within the middle of a probability of attainment continuum, such that people can imagine they might be able to reach their goals. In addition to goals, hope involves pathways thinking. Snyder described pathways as the mental capacity necessary to reach goals, which is also known as waypower. Pathways thinking allows individuals to find routes around obstacles to goals, which naturally occur as people often encounter challenges in their goal pursuit. For example, if one is learning to play the piano better, it might be difficult to find time to practice, Pathways thoughts might be those that would encourage one to prioritize activities, schedule specific practice times, and create a personal system of rewards in order to increase piano practice time. Agency is the third component of hope. Agency refers to the motivation that propels individuals to initiate and sustain movement towards their goals. People with agency, also known as willpower, are able to remain determined and utilize their mental energy to move around obstacles and stay focused on achieving their goals. For the person trying to play the piano better, agency thoughts would be those reminders to stick with it, focus on improvements, and keep working towards the goal. Snyder and colleagues note that pathways and agency thinking are positively related, additive, and reciprocal, but neither component alone defines hope. Agency and pathway are not synonymous, either, as some people show the ability to find pathways towards goals but not sustain the mental energy, or vice versa. Snyder and colleagues also distinguish hope from other motivation-related constructs. For example, they note that self-efficacy relates to an individual's perceived capacity to carry out actions related to goals, which is similar to agency thoughts. Yet, hope theory also emphasizes pathways thoughts about goal attainment, which are

not given equal emphasis in self-efficacy theory. While optimism, as conceptualized by Seligman, describes the positive attributions that individuals make about life events, hope is more focused on reaching specific goal related outcomes through the use of agency and pathways thoughts. Research has indicated that hope provides unique variance beyond optimism and self-efficacy in the prediction of well-being, thus providing additional support for its distinctiveness from these constructs. Hope Measurement Researchers have attempted to measure hope in different ways over the years. Stotland, for example, believed that it was more useful to ask individuals questions about their perceived capability of success, rather than utilizing self-report measures about their levels of hope. Erickson and colleagues devised a scale to operationalize Stotland's view of hope, and this scale included a list of goals to which individuals would rate the degree of their importance to them. Later, Staats and colleagues developed a measure of hope which assessed both the cognitive and affective sides of hope, particularly focused on specific events and outcomes. This hope scale required respondents to rate the extent to which an individual wished for and expected a certain item, such as having more friends or being happy. Snyder and colleagues developed several measures to assess hope in youth and adults in various contexts, including the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale, the Children's Hope Scale, and the Adult State Hope Scale, These efforts began with the development of the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale, also known as the Goals Scale. This 12-item self-report measure has been the most widely used in research over the past 15 years. The scale is designed to assess overall levels of trait hope, with high scores on the Goals Scale indicating high levels of hope. Four of the items tap into agency (e.g., I energetically pursue my goals), four tap into pathways (e.g., I can think of many ways to get out of a jam), and four are filler items that remain unscored. In original studies a 4-point Likert scale was used, but more recent studies have utilized an 8-point scale ranging from definitely false to definitely true. In the development and validation of the Adult Hope Scale the authors found that the scale demonstrated good internal and test-retest reliability across six samples of undergraduate college students and two samples of adults receiving psychological treatment. Hope scores among these populations were positively related to other similar constructs such as optimism, positive affect, self-esteem, and expectancy for attaining goals. The two-factor structure of the Adult Hope Scale was confirmed in subsequent studies, and this measure has been used frequently in studies of hope in adults. The Children's Hope Scale (CHS) is a 6-item self-report measure designed to assess hope in children 7 to 16 years of age. Three items on the CHS tap into agency (e.g., I think I am doing pretty well) and the other three reflect pathways thinking (e.g., When I have a problem, I can come up with lots of ways to solve it). A 6-point Likert scale is used with the CHS, ranging from none of the time to all of the time. In the process of development and validation of the CHS, the scale was administered to six samples of children with and without psychological, physical and behavioral concerns. Both internal and test-retest reliabilities were found to be adequate, and support for convergent validity was supported by positive relations between hope and higher self-perceptions of athletic ability, physical appearance, social acceptance and scholastic competence, and lower levels of depression. The Adult State Hope Scale is a six-item self-report scale designed to assess goal directed thinking in a given moment. Similar to the trait Adult Hope Scale, this measure includes items that tap into agency and pathways. Respondents are asked to rate items based on how they feel right now, and

responses can range from definitely true to definitely false. Across four samples of college students, the State Hope Scale demonstrated good internal and test-retest reliability estimates, and hope scores were related to daily self-esteem and positive affect scores. Other tools for hope measurement that have shown promising results from preliminary validation procedures include the domain-specific hope scale, the goal specific hope scale, and the young children's hope scale. Research Findings about Hope Efforts to study the role of hope in the lives of youth and adults have provided support for its utility as a construct that relates to well-being and several positive outcomes. Among adults, hope has been studied in terms of psychological adjustment, physical health, and academic and athletic performance. Findings have shown that high-hope adults form strong attachments to others, report having had close bonds to caregivers as children, and report less loneliness and more perceived social support. Furthermore, hope has been shown to be related to coping behaviors among individuals surviving illness and health concerns. For example, in adults coping with spinal cord injuries, arthritis, blindness and fibromyalgia, higher hope was associated with more adaptive coping, and among women with breast cancer, hope and emotional expression predicted perceived health and a sense of vigor. In the domains of academic and athletic achievement, hope has also been found to relate to positive outcomes in adults. College students with higher hope have been shown to perform better on standardized achievement tests, and achieve higher grade point averages later in their college careers. Hope was also found to relate to female track performance in college, even after controlling for ratings of natural ability, self-esteem, confidence, and locus of control. Among youth, hope has been shown to be associated with various positive constructs such as social acceptance and overall beliefs about their abilities to accomplish goals, as well as lower depression in children. Higher-hope adolescent burn survivors were found to engage in fewer behaviors that undermined recovery, and responded to caregivers more positively. Finally, high-hope girls attending a summer sport camp set more sport-specific goals and were less likely than low-hope girls to consider quitting their sports. Applications of Hope Theory With research indicating that hope is a useful construct related to many positive outcomes, psychologists have recently attempted to develop programs and interventions that might enhance this construct among youth and adults. Efforts have been made at the individual and group level, in various contexts. Among adults, three hope groups devoted to improving mood and treatment outcome have been evaluated. In one study, older adults with depression who received group therapy about goal-setting and hope demonstrated decreased anxiety, depression, and hopelessness, and increased levels of state hope in comparison to a group of adults who received a reminiscence therapy group. Similarly, college-aged adults who participated in an 8-week group about hope reported decreased levels of depression and anxiety and increased levels of hope. Finally, a 5-week pretreatment orientation group about hope led to improvement in clients' overall well-being, coping, and symptomatology. As a final example of an application of hope theory with adults, a relationship enrichment intervention was designed for couples which focused on hope and mutual goal-setting. Couples who participated in this intervention demonstrated increased partner satisfaction of adjustment and quality of couple skills, and higher satisfaction. Several promising programs have been developed to enhance hope among children and adolescents. One of the first interventions aimed at increasing hope in children involved learning

about hope theory and discussing stories about high-hope children. Children's hope was assessed with the CHS before and after the 8-week program, and results demonstrated improvement on both self-report and teacher ratings of students' hope. Another set of interventions, called Making Hope Happen, was developed by faculty and graduate students in counseling psychology at the University of Kansas. These 5-week programs were designed for 4th, 7th and 9th grade students. The sessions involved activities and lessons related to learning about hope and applying hope concepts to students' lives. For example, participants played hope games, designed hope cartoons with pathways and agency thoughts, and worked on personal goals that they described in a hope story. Pre- and post-test scores of hope demonstrated significant improvements in hope scores across all groups. Future Directions Various definitions of hope provided by researchers have led to differing measures and theoretical propositions. Snyder's conceptualization of hope has been most frequently studied, and findings have demonstrated that hope is a useful construct in the lives of youth and adults. Work in this area is not definitive, however, as hope measurement has yet to be understood with methods beyond self-report, or with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. In addition, the growth (and loss) of hope over time is an area ripe for future research. Many avenues for continued investigation of hope exist, as well as opportunities for the development and appropriate evaluation of prevention and intervention efforts for enhancing hope among youth and adults. Researchers and clinicians who apply hope theory can continue to study the value of nurturing hope by utilizing rigorous methodology including control groups and random assignment of participants to conditions

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