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Activating Hope: How Functional Support Can Improve Hope in Unemployed Individuals

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ACTIVATING HOPE: HOW FUNCTIONAL SUPPORT CAN IMPROVE HOPE IN

UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

By

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Activating Hope: How Functional Support Can Improve Hope in Unemployed Individuals

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  Hope is an adaptive mindset that enables one to work toward their goals and thwart obstacles they encounter in doing so. However, the stress associated with some situations, such as unemployment, can block hopeful thinking, causing one to become stuck in unmotivated and inflexible thinking patterns and therefore potentially trapped in the distressing situation. Through an online survey, this study explored whether functional support would predict reportedly low hope states in unemployed individuals ($N = 235$). More specifically, we predicted that functional support would encourage reappraisal of (and thus buffer against) distressing unemployment-related emotions, with that reappraisal altering the cognitive process that produces hope in favor of increased hopefulness. Hierarchical linear regression analyses revealed support for the claims that functional support is positively related to state hope and negatively related to unemployment distress, as well as that state hope was negatively related to unemployment distress. Further analyses demonstrated that esteem support in particular is crucial to hope-inducing perceptions of support, though belonging and appraisal support also affected hope. However, the results did not indicate that reappraisal was the mechanism by which support was associated with hope. Moreover, insignificant moderation analyses suggested that support was related to hope through a direct, not buffering, effect. Implications and future directions are discussed as well, with the results of this study contributing both practical and theoretical knowledge to the fields of hope, social support, and unemployment.

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Introduction

"No matter how difficult life becomes, there is always hope" – Dr. Drew Pinsky.

People enduring challenging circumstances are often told variations of the above quotation, likely in an effort to soften their anguish and encourage them to keep pushing forward. Frequently, though, the recipients of these messages are cognitively low in hope, a mindset for engaging with goals that reaches far beyond abstract appeals to positivity. Hope involves approaching both goal pursuits and unmet goals with a skillset broadly comprised of motivation and mental flexibility (Snyder, 1994). Despite the above quotation's idealistic assurance, accessing hope is more complicated than merely looking around until one finds it. Telling a low-hope person something akin to "hope is out there" is like telling a person stuck in a ditch that ladders exist—neither approach actually equips the person to change their situation. Instead, the person may need help building a ladder, or modifying the cognition that causes low-hope thinking.

In contrast to the relative stability offered by dispositional hope, stressful or otherwise anomalous circumstances such as losing one's job can alter one's momentary hope (Snyder et al., 1996). Thoits (1995) described such situational stress as life events, or "acute changes which require major behavioral readjustments within a relatively short period of time" (p. 54). Although direct strategies exist for learning to be more characteristically hopeful (see Snyder, 1994 for a review), those who experience low hope related to a temporary, distressing life event may not recognize their mindset as hopeless, and they may ruminate over the stress associated with their failed goal rather than attempting to improve their goal-seeking skills (Snyder, 1999). Instead, when handling stressful events, many people seek and/or welcome functional social

support from their social relationships (Birditt et al., 2012; Goldsmith, 2004). Generally, psychological and physical health both benefit from social support in times of stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Uchino, 2004). Since enacted support can help one cope with stressors through reappraisal (Thoits, 1986), support may also improve a low state-hope cognition related to the stress of not meeting a goal. However, while substantial literature covers both hope and social support independently, little work has been done to integrate both perspectives, and no other known research currently explores state hope in relation to functional support. Consequently, the question of how perceiving (and, consequently, receiving) functional support might enable one with a low-state-hope mindset to become more hopeful still stands.

This study examines the communicative act of enacted social support and the psychological construct of state hope, ultimately arguing that unemployed individuals in low-hope states may benefit from perceiving support that assists in coping by inspiring benign appraisals of goal-related failures. The goal of this study is to understand the connection between social support, unemployed individuals' levels of state hope, and distress. The project is grounded in the idea that functional social support will relate to high state hope, likely by encouraging stress-buffering appraisals. In testing this notion, the study will hopefully illuminate a potential explanation for the relationship between perceptions of received functional support and state-level hope.

Review of Literature

Unemployment is one of many situational stressors that can depress hope (Snyder, 1996). Unfortunately, many Americans are familiar with the gravity of job loss. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019) estimated that the average Baby Boomer in the United States experienced nearly six "spells" (periods) of unemployment between the ages of 18-52. Though no comparable study

exists for younger generations, a 2019 Brookings report found that long-term unemployment in the United States increased between 2006 and 2018. Furthermore, in 2018, there was less than a 30% chance one would find another job within a month of losing their previous one (Nunn et al., 2018). In tandem, these reports tell a story of countless Americans navigating the stress of unemployment each year, either for themselves or through a close friend or relative. Knowing that a hopeful mindset helps people adapt to and overcome challenges, like job loss, raises the question of how a low-hope unemployed person might increase their state-level hope.

Social Support in Times of Distress

The need for social support often arises during periods of distress. Psychological stress represents "a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 19). Similarly, Ridner (2004, p. 539) defines psychological distress as "the unique discomforting, emotional state experienced by an individual in response to a specific stressor or demand that results in harm, either temporary or permanent, to the person," with the following defining attributes: "perceived inability to cope effectively," "change in emotional state" (including lack of motivation), "discomfort," "communication of discomfort," and "harm" (for example, low self-esteem). Although the terms stress and distress are often used interchangeably, the concepts differ by the observations that (a) distress is distinguished by the perceived presence of harm, and (b) distress involves a specific emotional response. In contrast, stress is a nonspecific response to any potential demand, some of which can be positive. This project utilizes psychological distress, as this study is focused on unemployment—a specific stressor with the potential to cause harm and induce emotional changes.

Most people look for comfort in their close relational partners when facing stressful or distressing situations, such as when becoming forcibly unemployed. In fact, individuals prefer support from social, romantic, or familial relationships moreso than that from professionals, such as clergy or counselors (e.g. Coyne & DeLongis, 1986; Croog et al., 1972; Goldsmith, 2004). People expect talking about their stressors with close relational partners to result in support and coping assistance (e.g. Goldsmith et al., 2000; Goldsmith, 2004). Ultimately, those undergoing difficult circumstances tend to seek support from close relational partners, which enhances their perception of care and overall mood when the support is given responsively (Collins & Feeney, 2000). At the very least, distressed individuals are often comforted by believing that support exists should they want it.

Social support is "the perception or experience that one is loved and cared for by others, esteemed and valued, and part of a social network of mutual assistance and obligations" (Taylor, 2011, p. 192). Deemed an "interpersonal exchange," social support is fundamentally relational in nature (e.g., Gottlieb, 1985, p. 357). During times of psychological distress, social support, especially from close, similar others, can be the difference between positive and negative outcomes (Thoits, 2011; Uchino, 2004).

Yet, support can also work in tandem with other constructs to enhance well-being. For example, social support has been positively correlated with hope-adjacent characteristics such as optimism and self-esteem (Symister & Friend, 2003), hardiness (Ganellan & Blaney, 1984), resilience (Wilks & Spivey, 2010), coping (Pierce et al., 1996; Thoits, 1986), and self-efficacy (Major et al., 1990; Stetz et al., 2006). As discussed later in this paper, perceived support has also been linked to trait hope. Thus, social support could be beneficial for those facing a potentially low-hope situation, such as unemployment.

Types of Social Support

Conceptually, social support is considered a meta-construct comprised of several sub-constructs, including perceived/received and structural/functional support—distinctions that have significant methodological implications for this study (Haber et al., 2007). Perhaps the most common set of sub-constructs is perceived and received support. According to Haber et al. (2007), *perceived support* concerns recipients' perceptions of the broad availability of support and their overall satisfaction with that support. Comparatively, the authors note that *received support* focuses on specific behaviors that communicate support to recipients.

While the relationship between perceived support and health is well-established, that of received support and health has traditionally been inconsistent (Uchino, 2009). Additionally, although perceived support is relatively stable across time, received support is likely given situationally and in response to stress, making it a viable resource for coping with temporary stressful events (Barrera, 1986; Uchino, 2009). Perceived support logically reflects actual received support and some scholars argue that the distinction between these types of support is not as stark as some others make it out to be (Barrera, 1988; Hobfoll, 2009). Furthermore, received support measures have trouble accurately relating to well-being due to difficulties associated with validly capturing received support (Collins et al., 1993). Thus, this study will measure *perceived* support's relationship to hope to assess the impact social support could have on hope.

Social support is also distinguishable as either structural or functional in nature. *Structural support* refers to one's social network, classifying social ties, such as family membership, friendship, and church or community involvement, as social resources one can draw from when they are stressed (Barrera et al., 1981). This approach, also called social

capital, sees the quantity of available group connections, and thus resources, as a predictor of

general social well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Alternatively, *functional*, or enacted, support

is what one does and says for stressed others to promote coping (Goldsmith, 2004). Functional

support is responsive to specific stressors; it attempts to meet one's unmet needs so they can

cope with the stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Taylor, 2011).

Functional (i.e., enacted) support is commonly divided into five categories—

informational, emotional, esteem, network, and tangible support—and is generally grouped by

whether it is intended to facilitate action or nurture the recipient (see Table 1) (Cutrona & Suhr,

1992). Action-facilitating support focuses on solving the problem causing one stress and

includes informational and tangible aid (Cutrona & Suhr, 1992). For example, *informational*

support refers to giving advice, providing information, or suggesting alternate approaches to the

issue (Goldsmith, 2004). Goldsmith (2004) also notes that some researchers separate

informational support from *appraisal support*, in which the supporter provides or encourages

different evaluations of the problem. Likewise, *tangible (instrumental) support* includes offering

services or goods that could directly resolve some or all of the problem, such as completing a

task or giving a loan (Cutrona & Suhr, 1992; Schaefer et al., 1981). Simply put, receiving

informational or tangible support should directly alleviate one's stress when they are struggling

to resolve a specific problem.

Nurturant support, in contrast, encompasses emotional, esteem, and network support,

which are oriented toward comforting the recipient (Cutrona & Suhr, 1992). For example,

emotional support involves expressing concern for another by sending messages that one cares

for, values, and accepts them (Langford, 1997; Uchino, 2004). *Esteem support* attempts to make

people feel better about themselves and their abilities or accomplishments when they believe

their own attributes caused an uncomfortable situation, such as failure or rejection (Holmstrom, 2012). Finally, *belonging (network) support* communicates a sense of connection by highlighting that one has people to do social activities with (Uchino, 2004). Overall, receiving emotional, esteem, or belonging support should indirectly ease one's stress when their situation calls for comfort over problem solving.

While various types of support could be examined and are important to review because they show how this study might fit into the greater context of social support research, the arguments that perceived and received support are not entirely distinct from one another (Barrera, 1988; Hobfoll, 2009), and that people who are low in hope are unlikely to view themselves as having large social networks to rely on (Snyder, 1994) are persuasive. Therefore, this study focuses exclusively on the role of perceived functional support in influencing hopefulness among unemployed people.

The Buffering Hypothesis

Functional support from others can be extremely beneficial to those enduring psychological stress by acting as a metaphorical buffer. The buffering hypothesis (Cohen & Wills, 1985) contends that adequate and appropriate support protects one from the harmful effects of significant stress when it is responsive to the needs of a distressed individual. Social support is widely accepted as a buffer for stress across many domains. For example, social support has been shown to buffer stress regarding teacher burnout (Greenglass et al., 1996), workplace conflict (Dunseath et al., 1995), cancer-related traumatic stress (Carpenter et al., 2010), workload-family responsibility balance (Pluut et al., 2018), and management of chronic physical and mental illness (Dalgard et al., 1995; Gallant, 2003). Empirically, buffering is marked by a significant statistical interaction between high stress, but not low stress, and

functional support (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Okun et al., 1988). Accordingly, this study aims to show perceived support buffering the stress of losing one's job, which, as a failed goal attempt (Snyder, 1996), is likely to cause low-hope cognitions.

Although buffering has been more traditionally and consistently linked to perceived support (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Wethington & Kessler, 1986), evidence suggests that received support may also offer some protective benefits under certain conditions (Collins et al., 1993; Himle et al., 1989; Kaniasty & Norris, 1992; Lee et al., 2006; Okun et al., 1988; Olstad et al., 2001). Moreover, Hobfoll (2009) argues that a typical person's perception of support necessarily matches their reality, meaning that perceived support measures should also capture one's lived experience. Therefore, measuring perceived support should uncover potential buffering effects for both perception of support available and support a participant has actually received, allowing the conclusions drawn to potentially be extended to received support as well. Seeing as both perceived and received support demonstrate buffering effects against stress, the question changes from whether support buffers to *how* support buffers.

Social support can buffer stress by helping one appraise a high-stress situation as less threatening than they might otherwise perceive it to be (Wills & Shinar, 2000). Appraisal theories see physical or emotional reactions as consequences of one's appraisal, or cognitive evaluation, of an event (Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998; Roseman & Craig, 2001; Wells & Matthew, 2015). One's appraisal thus determines how positive or negative their reaction will be. Accordingly, reappraisal seeks to change the cognitions causing distressing emotions in hopes of altering one's negative emotional state. As Lazarus's (1991) cognitive-motivational-relational theory of coping explains, appraisals are conducted in two steps. First, a *primary appraisal* assesses how important the goal threatened by the stressor is to someone (Lazarus, 2000). After

labeling the stressor as important, one moves on the *secondary appraisal*, which regards the available means of coping (Lazarus, 1991). Essentially, the secondary appraisal asks, "What can I do to reduce my stress?" Both primary and secondary appraisals influence emotional experiences that follow. For example, upon being notified that they will be laid off from their job, a person might think, "This is a really bad situation because now I can't pay for my basic needs," and begin to feel fear. Upon perhaps then thinking, "And my employer did this intentionally, and I can't change their decision," the person might also begin to feel anger mixed with an increased intensity of fear. However, social support may help them reappraise either the importance of the situation or how capable they are at managing it, resulting in a less distressed state.

Social support mitigates the deleterious effects of stressors by "promoting less threatening interpretations of adverse events and effective coping strategies" (Cohen, 2004, p. 677; Cohen et al., 2004; Cohen & Wills, 1985). Social support serves as coping assistance when it invites changes to how one ascribes meaning to an event, one's emotional response to the event, the event itself, or all three phenomena (Thoits, 1986). Thoits further argues that social support invites change by encouraging one to a) reinterpret an event as less threatening or b) engage in coping tactics to manage the stress. For example, Dunkel-Schetter et al. (1987) found that when stressful situations were appraised as threats to self-esteem, threat appraisals were negatively correlated with the receipt of informational, tangible, and emotional support. Because appraisal is a stress-buffering technique, social support that assists in the appraisal process can induce a buffering effect.

Communication is integral to how buffering is promoted through reappraisal. As Burleson and Goldsmith (1998) reflected, even matched support alone may not accurately

predict instances wherein support is perceived as helpful. Thus, they offered a framework for comforting communication that spurs reappraisal of distressing emotions. They argue that the most comforting messages emphasize topics related to the specific emotion people are experiencing, are descriptive in nature, and are sensitive toward face concerns (Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998). Cohesively, these kinds of messages facilitate a supportive communication environment, where the support receiver feels comfortable elaborating on their feelings and is encouraged to reappraise either the importance of the event causing stress or their coping strategies. Reappraisal likely has rich benefits for low-hope individuals because studies have shown that the negative impacts of depressive symptoms—the ultimate end of hopelessness—on relational and emotional well-being are lessened when one engages in cognitive reappraisal (e.g., Sachs-Ericsson et al., 2019, Shapero et al., 2018). Consequently, reappraisal is likely to help low-hopers improve their psychological well-being via supportive communication, which is critical to the appraisal process when one seeks to help another through a stressful event.

Hope: A Mindset for Success

Clearly, social support benefits people undergoing distressing situations by helping them reappraise the situation as either less important or easier to cope with. Reappraisal can change people's emotions, but less is known about how it might impact hope, which controls the appraisals that induce emotion. Colloquially, hope is often understood as the belief that one's situation can get better—one might not know how or when it could improve, but something compels them to hold tight to the idea that it will. However, research has shown that hope is more nuanced and pointed than this simple conceptualization suggests. As Lopez et al. (2003) clarify, hope is commonly viewed through either an emotion-based or cognition-based lens. Emotion-based hope theorists describe the phenomenon as a socially and culturally situated

anticipation of a pleasurable outcome. Through their eyes, feeling the emotion of hope is what draws people toward their goals. On the other hand, Lopez et al. (2003) note that cognition-based theorists see hope as a positive expectancy that is ignited when the probability of a good outcome outweighs that of a bad one. Instead of a stand-alone occurrence, these researchers assert that hope serves as the link between expectations and desires.

While the emotional and cognitive viewpoints both have merit, Snyder et al. (1991) combined the two to create hope theory, which conceptualizes emotions as one's response to their cognitive evaluation of their own goal-related activities (Snyder, 2002). Hope theory has been the dominant perspective of hope among social scientists over the last three decades due to its wide applicability and quantitative measurement capabilities (Corn et al., 2020), and it remains a valid framework for goal-oriented cognitions (Cheavens et al., 2019). Hope theory will inform the discussion of hope and goals for the duration of this paper because it is a more complete, orderly, and heuristic explanation of hope, compared to other prominent conceptualizations that simply view hope as one's perception that they can reach their goals (Snyder et al, 2002a).

What Hope Is

Snyder et al. (1991) defined hope as "a cognitive set that is based on a reciprocally derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed determination) and (b) pathways (planning of ways to meet goals)" (p. 571). In other words, a hopeful mindset involves perceiving that one has both the "willpower" and "waypower" to climb the mountain in front of them or rebound from a failed attempt (Rand & Touza, 2020; Snyder, 1994). Hope theory rests on the assumption that human behavior is largely goal oriented, a perspective which is traditionally supported by social psychologists (Ajzen & Madden, 1985; Heider, 1958). According to this viewpoint,

behavior is purposeful; people consciously (and unconsciously) position themselves to target

objectives of various importance, from leaving for work on time each day to becoming a CEO.

Austin and Vancouver (1996) define goals as internal representations of desired outcomes. As

most of humans' actions are goal-directed, hope acts as a combination of motivation and ability

to pursue those goals. In particular, hope is more critical to the pursuit of complex goals that are

deeply important to us, such "I would like to become the CEO of a large company," than it is for

simple, subconscious goals like "I would like to leave for work by 8:30" (Snyder, 1994; 1996).

Regardless of the size of the goal, hope is the driving force.

To chase their goals, hopeful people rely on their aforementioned agency and pathways.

Snyder (1994) described agency, or "willpower," as "the sense of mental energy…that over time

helps to propel the person…toward the goal" (p. 6). Those who are agentic are motivated to see

themselves as capable of pursuing a certain outcome. He then depicted pathways, or

"waypower," as "the perceived ability to generate routes" to make the goal happen (1994, p. 8;

1995, p. 355). Agentic thoughts include phrases like, "'I *can* do this'" or "'I am *not* going to be

stopped,'" and pathways thoughts resemble, "'I'll find a way to get this done'" (Snyder et al.,

1998; Snyder, 2000, p. 13, emphasis in original). In other words, being hopeful means

possessing "both the 'will and the way'" to achieve one's desires (Rand & Touza, 2020; Snyder

et al., 1991; Snyder, 1995, p. 355). While a high-hope person employs both agency and

pathways, a low-hope person lacks at least one of those elements, making goals, and thus hope,

seem less attainable. In essence, Snyder et al. (1991) postulate that agency and pathways are the

conditions that must be met if one is to truly believe that things can and will get better; people

are motivated to think and act hopefully when they perceive that they have both the willpower

and waypower to meet a goal. Without these perceptions, however, the motivational and

planning benefits of hope are jeopardized, which is problematic for those facing challenges like unemployment.

Although hope is most commonly conceptualized as a disposition (Alarcon et al., 2013; Snyder et al., 1991), it can also be studied at the state level, or in isolated instances. Hope is usually considered a disposition because, like optimism, it acts as a predictably strong coping mechanism when life is difficult (Snyder et al., 1996). Hope levels foretell how one will generally respond to trials. However, Snyder et al. (1996) contend that measuring hope at the state level serves a different purpose. Testing state-hope allows researchers to account for one's hope cognitions at a specific moment in time, as certain circumstances—such as unemployment—may evoke strong hopeful or hopeless thoughts that overpower their disposition. In this way, state hope "provides a snapshot of a person's current goal-directed thinking" (Snyder et al., 1996, p. 321). High levels of state hope have also been positively associated with well-being and coping abilities and negatively associated with depression symptoms (Irving et al., 2004). Additionally, an individual's trait hope level functions as an expected range for state hope levels (Snyder et al., 1996). Those with high trait hope are likely to also score higher on state-hope measures because they habitually foster circumstances where their goals can be met. Thus, dispositional and state hope are positively correlated, meaning the benefits of high hope pertain to both measurements (Snyder, 1994).

For the purposes of this study, hope will be treated exclusively as a state. Unemployment is usually a temporary stressor, so a state hope measure should capture one's goal-related thinking patterns regarding unemployment. Alongside social support and appraisal measures, evaluating state hope should elucidate whether social support can catalyze a change in momentary hope cognitions.

What Hope is Not

Painting a complete picture of hope and its utility involves distinguishing it from similar constructs. When people fail to meet a goal or aim for a goal that seems impossible, they are sometimes critiqued as falling victim to "false hope." Correspondingly, some researchers believe that it can be maladaptive to lean on high hope when expectations are illusionary in nature, the goals being pursued are inappropriate, or the methods used to pursue goals are untenable (see Snyder, 2002; Snyder et al., 2002b for a review). For the unemployed, false hope might look like clinging to one's previous goal of remaining employed at a particular workplace or attempting to meet a goal of financial security by exclusively purchasing lottery tickets. However, Snyder's (2002) work demonstrates that illusively high expectations actually signal low hope, that high hope people typically find joy in chasing after lofty goals, and that one ought not pass off seemingly untenable goals as "false hopes," considering instead whether the goals in question meet the criteria for hopeful thinking at all. Distinguishing truly hopeful behaviors from those that seem hopeful but actually represent low-hope thinking helps clarify what hopeful thoughts related to unemployment are likely to sound like.

Additionally, hope is often conflated with characteristics such as optimism and self-efficacy, especially in everyday conversation. However, the three constructs are distinct and ought to be treated as such. At the trait level, optimism "reflects the extent to which people hold generalized favorable expectancies for their future" (Carver et al., 2010, p. 879). In other words, optimistic people anticipate that good things will happen to them. The key difference between hope and optimism is that optimism focuses on positive future outcomes without reflecting how those outcomes come to be (Carver & Scheier, 2014), whereas hope always considers the process by which outcomes occur via pathways. Optimism expresses more general beliefs about the

world, while hope relates to beliefs about one's ability to reach specific goals (Bryant &

Cvengros, 2004). Optimistic thoughts might include "my future will end up being bright, no

matter what," while hopeful thoughts might involve phrases like "I know I can make my future

bright by doing x, y, and z." Finally, unlike sole optimists, hopeful people do not expect to meet

every goal they set, at least not as they originally planned (Snyder, 1996). Because they take

pride in their problem-solving abilities, they are relatively unphased by setbacks, and they

believe they will maneuver around them. So, although they share qualities, hope and optimism

are functionally different traits.

   Similarly, self-efficacy is sometimes mistaken for hope. Coming from the field of

behavioral change, self-efficacy represents one's belief in their own capability to take a

particular course of action (Peterson et al., 2006). Self-efficacy governs the amount and duration

of effort people will expend when combating obstacles, as well as whether one will employ

coping behavior (Bandura, 1977). As previously noted, agency and pathways must both be

present to produce hope. Despite its agency-reminiscent motivational qualities, self-efficacy

does not address the "how" that pathways represent (Snyder et al., 1996). Self-efficacy rests on

the notion that one *can* execute actions in isolated contexts, while hope stresses that one *will* both

initiate and sustain goal-focused actions (Snyder, 2002). Therefore, while self-efficacy and hope

are both integral to how humans become motivated to work toward goals, they are distinct in

how well they actually move people toward outcomes. Moreover, Magaletta and Oliver (1999)

found that hope is a unique construct when compared to both self-efficacy and optimism. Yet,

even more striking is the finding that "will" (agency) is distinct from self-efficacy and "ways"

(pathways) are independent from optimism. Together, these findings suggest that hope is

theoretically, incrementally, and holistically different from optimism and self-efficacy.

Improving Hope Levels

Being either chronically or acutely low in hope is difficult. Whereas those who reach their goals report positive emotions (even if they encounter roadblocks along the way), those who cannot move past impasses and become stuck report negative emotions (Snyder et al., 1996). Compared to a high-hope person's zeal for goal activities, a low-hope person typically feels apathetic or dispirited toward goal-directed thinking (Snyder, 2002). Some people grow up in environments or with caregivers who do not promote the development of hope, leading to low-hope dispositions. However, isolated natural and human-caused events can also cause fluctuation in state hope. Consequently, some people struggle with willpower, waypower, or both when they lose a significant connection or encounter a particularly stressful situation, such as the loss of a job (Snyder, 1994).

On the other hand, thinking hopefully is extremely beneficial. When encountering an obstacle to achieving a goal, one study showed that high-hope people continued engaging in both agency and pathways behaviors, medium-hope people sustained pathways but lost agency, and low-hope people saw dips in both agency and pathways (see Snyder et al., 1991). As a result, high-hope individuals are more likely to retain their motivation and to classify obstacles as a positive challenge, in contrast to low-hope individuals, who trend toward seeing obstacles as a potential threat (e.g., Chang & DeSimone, 2001; Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder, 2002). Additionally, while high-hope people typically produce one direct pathway to a goal, they are much more flexible than low-hope people when the original route does not yield the desired results (Snyder, 2002). High-hopers also set a greater number of goals for themselves (Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder et al., 2002b). Likewise, they tend to set appropriate stretch goals, whereas low-hopers set unsatisfying goals that are either far too easy or far too difficult (Snyder et al.,

1991; Snyder et al., 2002c). These characteristics set high-hopers up to be more adaptable and successful in many areas of life, including when navigating challenges like job loss.

Because hope uniquely carries so many advantages, it is critical to ask how someone becomes hopeful if they are not by nature or if something causes them to lose hope. To do this, one needs to first examine how a low-hope person is classified. While utility exists in broadly identifying individuals' patterns of thought, high-hope and low-hope are non-exhaustive labels (Snyder et al., 1996). Instead, a low-hope individual may lack agency, pathways, or both. Snyder et al. (2002) offered four conceptualizations of hope, based on one's ability to engage with both willpower and waypower. Since agency and pathways-related thoughts contribute to and build upon one another, a high-hope person displays both qualities.

However, low-hope orientations can be designated by one of three permutations. An individual with a mixed pattern of low pathways and high agency would be motivated to pursue goals, but they would struggle with the steps to get there. Inversely, one with high pathways and low agency would lack the motivation to go after their goals, despite their ability to think them through. Finally, a fully low-hope person, denoted by a lack of both agency and pathways, would be unmotivated and feel unable to approach any goals they held or that were imposed upon them. In fact, low-hope people are often depressed, report feeling stuck, or are otherwise unsatisfied with their lives (Snyder, 1994). The separation of the three varieties of lower-hope thought processes sheds light on the nuance behind low-hope thinking. Put differently, knowing that one is generally low-hope is useful when exploring the drawbacks of low-hope thinking as a whole. But if the goal is understanding a particular person's low-hope thoughts and working to remedy them, then it becomes necessary to identify the weak link of the hope chain.

As Snyder (1994) broadly argues, low-hope people can learn to think more hopefully. State hope's potential for change is also supported more generally by Gist and Mitchell's (1992) argument that state constructs can be manipulated by a variety of factors. For example, Peterson et al. (2006) found that negative verbal cues did lower state hope, but, to their surprise, positive verbal cues did not. Consistent with Burleson and Goldsmith's (1998) argument regarding quality of supportive messages, Peterson et al.'s (2006) results imply that, instead of merely using positive words, focusing on actually solving a specific problem might help one feel more hopeful in a given stressful moment. The question, then, is what might help those low in hope become hopeful.

Stimulating Hope Through Social Support

As previously mentioned, failing to meet or maintain a goal—such as "remaining employed" or "retaining my current lifestyle"—is distressing (Carver et al., 2008). Likewise, low hope cognitions, represented by a lack of agency and/or pathways in response to goals, are also likely to induce stress. This study contends that enacted social support will relate to one's appraisal of the situation, and thus buffer against distress associated with being unemployed. Unemployment signifies the loss of a previously-attained goal, making it likely to correspond with low state-level hope cognitions (Snyder, 1996). Therefore, the stress buffering model and appraisal serve as the guiding theoretical perspectives of this paper.

Studies looking for a relationship between social support and Snyder's hope scales have only measured perceived social support and dispositional hope. Still, these studies have demonstrated positive correlations between hope and social support (e.g., Barnum et al., 1998; Ekas et al., 2016; Ho et al., 2021; Irving et al., 1997; Hasson-Ohayon et al., 2014; Merkaš & Brajša-Žganec, 2011; Sahranç et al., 2017). Moreover, in a sample of Turkish high school

students, Kemer and Atik (2012) found that esteem and instrumental support were associated with high hope for urban students, and informational support was linked to high hope for rural students. Additionally, though hope and social support were not measured directly via correlation, Lu and Hsu (2013) found that low (pathways) hope Taiwanese high school students who perceived they had access to a high degree of social support reported significantly better subjective well-being than students who perceived low social support availability, suggesting hope and social support work together to enhance well-being. Finally, Horton and Wallander (2001) demonstrated that perceived social support can seemingly buffer the goal-related stress associated with being low in dispositional hope, with hope moderating the relationship between support and stress. Taken together, these studies indicate that those who perceive they have more access to social support are also characteristically more hopeful.

However, these studies tell an incomplete story of the interaction between hope and social support because only the connection between support and dispositional hope has so far been studied. Thus, how social support of any form affects state hope remains unclear. Yet, research indicates that healthy relational behaviors do relate to state hope. For example, state hope is associated with more constructive conflict management and less overall interpersonal conflict and challenges to relational maintenance (Merolla et al., 2021). Moreover, the general flexibility of psychological states (Gist & Mitchell, 1992) suggests that social support, with its demonstrated power to change reactions to stress, could alter one's state hope. This change is possible because low-hope people with effective support systems are likely to reappraise distressing situations more hopefully than those without helpful support.

One of the explanations for the connection between support and state-hope is that support-induced reappraisal could alter one's state hope cognitions, just as it does emotions. For

example, Lazarus (1991) conceptualizes emotions as "reactions to the status of goals" (p. 820).

Emotions relevant to specific goal pursuits are dictated by hope; they "are the sequelae of

cognitive appraisals of goal-related activities (Snyder et al., 1991, p. 571). Burleson and

Goldsmith's (1998) framework seeks to change emotional distress through support-induced

reappraisal. Although hope itself represents the cognition, not the emotional reaction, focusing

on the emotion in one's supportive communication may be the path to encouraging change in the

appraisal, which is guided by hope. In fact, when compared to other traits such as optimism and

pessimism, dispositional hope plays a "unique role in shaping positive appraisals of adversity"

by boosting benefit-finding (Tennen & Affleck, 1999, p. 286). Furthermore, Snyder et al. (1991)

noted preliminary evidence for a relationship between higher state hope and more positive

appraisals of events. Similarly, Chang and DeSimone (2001) found that hope was associated

with secondary, but not primary, appraisals. They suggest that hope may not have been related

to primary appraisals because hope likely does not change how significant one perceives a

stressor to be—just how well they cope with it. For example, losing an important formerly-

attained goal (like a satisfying job) will still feel important regardless of reappraisal, but the

difference between high and low hope people lies in how adaptively they respond to that loss.

Adaptive coping behaviors following a failed or stripped goal require hopeful cognitions

regarding the stress. Unsurprisingly, hopeful people are likely to engage in these behaviors on

their own. Because they cognitively appraise goal failures as benign, those who set high

achievement goals—such as hopeful people—live more satisfying lives than non-goal setters do

(Wang et al., 2017). While high-hope cognitions naturally dilute or alleviate the distress

associated with failed goals, low-hope cognitions do the opposite; they put one at risk of anger,

defeat, apathy, and even depression (Snyder, 1994). Such states are likely to reduce one's

motivation to purposefully engage in the reappraisal process. However, helping another reduce

the stressor's perceivable threat, or making coping easier by creating a supportive

communication environment, encourages reappraisals, which can ease the feelings such as

apathy or defeat that make hope cognitions difficult for low-hopers (Burleson & Goldsmith,

1998; Thoits, 1986). Thus, because appraisals can be altered by support, support perceptions that

reduce the negative valences of those appraisals should also relate to higher state hope levels.

Supporting Hopeful Thinking in Context: Unemployment

Many situations can decrease hope, including unemployment. Snyder (1994) outlined

four conditions of goal impediments that provoke anger and apathy, resulting in a lack of hope:

the blocked goals are significant, the blockage affects multiple goals, the obstructions feel large

in magnitude, and the obstacles are enduring. He considers unemployment an example of these

characteristics; losing one's job can silence even a normally hopeful person's agency and

pathways thoughts because one's identity and overall life stability can be wrapped up in their

career.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2015) specifies that "people who are jobless,

looking for a job, and available for work are *unemployed*" (para. 15, italics in original). The

BLS (2015) also considers those who are laid off and waiting to be recalled as unemployed,

regardless of whether they are seeking a new job. Because having a reliable job is important to

most adults for a variety of reasons, losing that completed goal is often a harrowing experience.

Thus, regardless of one's dispositional hope level, a highly stressful life event like unexpected

unemployment could explain a low state-hope cognition.

Unemployment can also cause harm by diminishing self-esteem and overall

psychological well-being, stunting emotional and personal development, and inducing anxiety,

helplessness, and depression, with these negative effects growing in magnitude for those

identifying as Black or Latinx (Goldsmith & Diette, 2012; Houssemand et al., 2021; Kessler et

al., 1988; Wood & Burchell, 2018). Additionally, unemployment shifts one's locus of control,

causing them to perceive decreased control over their life (Preuss & Hennecke, 2018). Because

high-hope people believe they have control over their lives, a person whose job loss feels

uncontrollable is also likely to be low in hope (Snyder, 1994). Thus, unemployment is an

exceedingly stressful state, where one is at an increased risk for operating under low-hope

thinking patterns.

Furthermore, unemployment can easily lead to a low-hope mindset because of the type of

obstruction it represents. Snyder (1996) distinguished between the loss of a goal that one was

pursuing and one that they had already achieved. Unemployment, then, falls into the latter

category. It can be particularly devastating to lose a realized goal object, such as a job, that one

worked hard to attain. This disappointment can then encumber one's attempts to rebound. For

example, trying to employ waypower may be frustrating because the pathways they confidently

relied on to secure their previous job have disappeared. Moreover, trying to forge new routes

may also be upsetting; one would be painfully reminded of their circumstance and could struggle

to even conceptualize a new end goal. Additionally, Snyder (1996) illustrated a loss of

willpower as feeling deflated, as though one is blocked from their goal and is asking "what's the

point of trying again?" In this case, finding the motivation to look for a path forward could be

challenging. Finally, Snyder suggested that one would feel the most dejected when the lost goal

was something one cherished and worked hard to reach. In other words, one could be

overwhelmed by the reality that they can no longer maintain a goal they put considerable time or

thought into reaching. Because it can be difficult to find a job, especially a meaningful one,

losing one's job is especially stressful (Achor et al., 2018; Nunn et al., 2019). Even if a person's employment is not particularly engaging, they still glean value from the identity or security they gain from their work, and losing those benefits can be distressing (Fryers, 2006; Weir, 2013). Either way, a person who has lost their job is a likely candidate for low-hope thinking patterns.

Seeing as unemployment is an exceedingly stressful and potentially harmful state, unemployed individuals must find relief before adaptively moving forward. Fortunately, social support has been shown to buffer the negative emotional and health impacts of unemployment (Turner et al., 1991). For example, over a two-year period following the closure of their workplace, men who perceived they had access to more social support reported fewer health maladies than those who perceived they had less support (Gore, 1978). Likewise, Cutrona and Russell (1990) found that tangible support reduced finance-related stressors, while network and esteem support helped ease nonfinancial stressors. Lastly, Faria et al. (2019) found that social support protected against suicidal ideations Portuguese adults who were unemployed, especially those unemployed for more than a year. Considering these studies together, it seems possible that social support's buffering capabilities will help alleviate the unusually high stress of unemployment through reappraisal, thus enabling hopeful thinking about critical goals such as re-employment.

Given the potential for unemployment to be associated with low state-hope, as well as the clear stress-buffering effects of social support through reappraisal in times of joblessness, this study seeks to examine the following hypotheses. A visual representation of the hypotheses can be seen in Figure 1:

H1: The amount of overall functional support one perceives as available will negatively

relate to their stress appraisal levels.

H2: Unemployed individuals' stress appraisal levels will negatively relate to their state hope levels.

H3: The amount of overall functional support one perceives as available will positively relate to their state hope level.

H4: The amount of overall functional support one perceives as available will negatively relate to their distress level.

H5: Unemployed individuals' state hope levels will negatively relate to their unemployment-related distress levels.

H6: Types of enacted support that are related to benign primary and secondary appraisals of unemployment will also be positively associated with higher state hope.

H7: The amount of functional support one perceives as available will moderate (buffer) the relationship between unemployment-related stress appraisals and state hope level.

Method

Participants

This study was open to individuals above the age of 18 who were unemployed at the time they took the survey. For the purpose of this study, unemployment refers to those who fall under the BLS (2015) definition, which was provided to the participants (see Procedure section for this definition). We did not target participants with certain characteristics beyond age and unemployment status, such as gender or ethnicity. Participation was entirely voluntary and self-selected. The study was announced over social media (unemployment or job-related Reddit threads, personal Facebook pages, Facebook groups geared toward unemployment, Instagram, Twitter) and by asking a few organizations that work with unemployed people to circulate the study. For the social media posts, we shared the link to the study across our own networks,

though friends/classmates/family members etc. were also asked to share the link to maintain participants' privacy.

After data collection was finished, the data was checked for valid responses. First, we filtered out every participant who (a) did not agree to the informed consent, (b) indicated that they were employed after reading the BLS' descriptions of employed and unemployed individuals, or (c) did not complete the survey. Although 385 total participants began the survey, the data-screening process resulted in 235 valid responses for analysis. Of the 235 participants included in data analysis, the median duration of the survey was 11.60 minutes.

The participants ($N = 235$) largely identified as female (57.6%), with 38.1% identifying as male, 2.6% identifying as non-binary/third gender, .9% identifying as other, and .9% preferring not to say. Of those who indicated their ethnicity, most participants identified as White (68.8%), followed by Asian (9.5%), other (7.8%), Black or African American, prefer not to say (3.5%), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (1.7%), and American Indian or Alaska Native (1.3%). For age range, most participants were 25-34 years old (36.8%), followed by 34-44 (23.8%), 18-24 (16.0%), 45-54 (11.3%), 55-64 (10.4%), 65-74 (1.3%), and 75+ (.4%).

Other demographics of interest include that the vast majority of participants had some sort of education beyond a high school diploma (90.9%), with over one third of participants (35.7%) holding a bachelor's degree. Most participants (76.6%) had worked at their most recent job for five or fewer years prior to becoming unemployed. Additionally, almost half (49.4%) of participants were considering making a major career-related change, such as moving, going back to school, or switching industries, as a result of their current unemployment experience.

Finally, several demographic questions sought to understand how unemployment was impacting participants' daily lives. The majority of participants reported being unemployed for

more than 12 months (50.2%), followed by 10-12 months (13.6%), 1-3 months, 4-6 months, and

7-9 months (11.1% each), and less than 1 month (3%). Over two thirds (70.4%) of participants

indicated that their post-job loss annual household income was less than $49,999, and almost half

(47.0%) reported earning less than $24,999. Coupled with the fact that less than half (48.1%) of

participants were receiving some sort of state and/or federal unemployment assistance at the time

of the survey, these frequencies demonstrate that many participants were likely facing some

degree of financial insecurity.

Compared to the United States' unemployed population, the data in this sample were not

entirely representative of national data. Based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics' report on April

of 2021, women 16+ made up roughly 45% of the unemployed population, with men

representing 55%. In contrast, our data included about 20% more women than men. Next, the

report showed that unemployment rates for those identifying as Asian (5.7), Hispanic/Latino

(7.9), and Black/African American (9.7) were all higher than the rate for those identifying as

White (5.3). However, our data showed participants overwhelmingly identifying as White.

Lastly, the BLS report (2021) showed that nearly a quarter of unemployed individuals had been

unemployed less than five weeks and 43% had been unemployed longer than 6 months, whereas

our data showed a more drastic trend with just 3% being unemployed less than one month and

74.9% being unemployed longer than 6 months.

Measures

For this cross-sectional study, we measured four variables: functional social support ($M =$

2.75, $SD = .71$), unemployment-related distress (negative affect: $M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.11$); positive

affect: $M = 2.43$, $SD = .87$), cognitive appraisals of stress ($M = 3.17$ $SD = .40$), and state hope (M

$= 4.51$, $SD = 1.81$). For some analyses, functional support was broken down into appraisal ($M =$

2.80, $SD = .86$), tangible ($M = 2.88$, $SD = .81$), esteem ($M = 2.63$, $SD = .65$), and belonging ($M =$ 2.68, $SD = .79$) support, and hope was separated into agency ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 2.05$) and pathways ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.80$).

Functional Support

The general population version of the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL) was used to measure perceived availability of functional social support (Cohen et al., 1985). While this study was interested in reception of support, received support measures are typically unreliable predictors of buffering (Wethington & Kessler, 1986), and perceived support reflects actual supportive behaviors received for the general population (Hobfoll, 2009; Barrera, 1988). The ISEL is a 40-item instrument that measures perceived availability of tangible, appraisal, esteem, and belonging support (Wills & Shinar, 2000). Twenty of the 40 items are reverse-coded. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with each statement using the following four choices: definitely true (3), probably true (2), probably false (1), and definitely false (0). Example items include, "There is at least one person I know whose advice I really trust," (appraisal support), "If I needed help fixing an appliance or repairing my car, there is someone who would help me" (tangible support), "There is someone who takes pride in my accomplishments" (esteem support), and "I feel like I'm not always included by my circle of friends" (belonging support).

The ISEL has been shown to be both a reliable and valid measure of perceived social support. As reported by Wills and Shinar (2000), the full 40-item scale has a Cronbach's alpha of .90, suggesting exceptional internal consistency. Test-retest reliability was also approximately .90. Additionally, the 10-item subscales for each of the support types measured have Cronbach's alphas and test-retest reliability between .70-.80. In this study, the overall measure had an alpha

of .97, with subtest alphas of .93 for appraisal support, .89 for esteem support, .91 for tangible

support, and .92 for belonging support. Cronbach's alpha remains the most widely used measure

of internal consistency, with coefficients of .70 or above traditionally considered acceptable for

research (Peterson, 1994). Moreover, the ISEL displays both construct and discriminant validity

when correlated with the Inventory of Socially Supportive Behaviors (.46) and various measures

of social anxiety (-.52 to -.64) (Heitzmann & Kaplan, 1988). Heitzmann and Kaplan (1988) also

reported that an additional benefit of the ISEL is its resistance to social desirability bias. As

Wills and Shinar (2000) reflected, the ISEL is a popular and trustworthy measure of perceived

social support.

Unemployment-Related Distress

Participants' distress levels regarding their unemployment situations were measured

using the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson et al., 1988). The PANAS is

a popular self-report instrument that measures an individual's positive and negative affect. In

particular, this study used the "moment" version of the PANAS, which asks participants to

reflect on how they feel "right now, at the present moment" (Watson et al., 1988, p. 1070). The

PANAS consists of 20 items, which participants rate according to the extent to which they have

experienced that feeling or emotion over a specified period of time. Example items include

"interested," "guilty," "determined," and "upset" (Watson et al., 1988). Participants were asked

to rate the words on a Likert-type scale from 1-5, where 1 = very slightly or not at all, 2 = a little,

3 = moderately, 4 = quite a bit, and 5 = extremely.

The PANAS has exhibited strong reliability and validity. Watson et al. (1988) reported

that Cronbach's alpha for the positive affect subscale ranged from .86-.90, with alphas for the

negative affect subscale between .84-.87. More specifically, the "moment" version of the

PANAS has a positive affect alpha of .89, a negative affect alpha of .85, and an intercorrelation of -.15. This study exhibited acceptable alpha scores as well, with the overall measure being .74, the positive affect subtest being .89, and the negative affect subtest being .92. In addition to the internal consistency and small intercorrelations, the PANAS also demonstrates test-retest reliability, making it an overall reliable measure of affect. Similarly, the PANAS is also a valid measure. Watson et al.'s (1988) study showed strong factorial validity, meaning the PANAS does capture the factors that contribute to positive and negative affect (Watson & Clark, 1997). Finally, associations with general affect measures (both positive and negative affect), perceived stress and anxiety (negative affect only), and social activity and calm mood states (positive affect only) have confirmed the PANAS' external validity as well. Wholistically, the PANAS is a reliable and valid measure of positive and negative affect, with established success in representing individuals' distress levels.

Whereas positive affect refers to a state of enthusiasm, high energy, pleasurable engagement, and activity, and negative affect reflects subjective distress, anger, guilt, contempt, and unpleasurable engagement, a person whose ratings indicate high negative affect and low positive affect would be considered distressed. Therefore, we created a single "distress" measure by subtracting positive affect scores from negative affect scores.

Stress Appraisals

Participants' appraisals of their unemployment situation were measured with the Stress Appraisal Measure (SAM) (Peacock & Wong, 1990). The SAM is a self-report measure consisting of 28 items and seven subscales, with four items each per subscale. The subscales are divided into three categories: primary appraisals (including threat, challenge, and centrality), secondary appraisals (including controllable-by-self, controllable-by-others, and uncontrollable-

by-anyone), and general stress. Threat refers to one's potential for future harm/loss, challenge

refers to one's expectation of gain or growth from the event, and centrality refers to one's

perception of the event's importance to their well-being (Peacock & Wong, 1990; Carpenter,

2016). Example items include: "Will the outcome of this situation be negative?" (threat), "How

eager am I to tackle this problem?" (challenge; reverse-scored), "Do I have what it takes to do

well in this situation?" (controllable-by-self; reverse-scored), "Is there anyone who can help me

manage this problem?" (controllable-by-others; reverse-scored), "Is this a totally hopeless

situation?" (uncontrollable-by-anyone), and "Does this situation create tension in me?" (general

stress). Participants were instructed to indicate the extent to which each question is true for them

from 1-5, where 1 = not at all, 2 = slightly, 3 = moderately, 4 = considerably, and 5 = extremely.

The SAM is generally considered a reliable and valid measure of momentary cognitive

appraisals. Peacock and Wong (1990) reported Cronbach's alphas for six of the seven subscales

ranging from .74-.90, with the alpha for the uncontrollable-by-anyone subscale being .51.

However, the researchers' second developmental study showed alphas above .70 for all seven

subscales. They posit that the initially low alpha for the uncontrollable-by-anyone subscale

could have been caused by a lack of variability in ratings. Despite some concerns about the

reliability of each individual subscale (see Roesch & Rowley, 2005), other studies have

demonstrated acceptable alphas for all seven subscales (see Carpenter, 2016 for a review).   This

study showed a slightly low alpha rating of .68 for the overall measure and .74-.89 for the

subtests, which were not used in insolation for this study. Based on a relatively low

intercorrelation of .22 and generally high alphas, the SAM is seen as an internally consistent and

independent measure (Peacock & Wong, 1990). Moreover, the SAM has exhibited convergent

validity by correlating with measures of mood and physical symptoms of stress (Peacock &

Wong, 1990). The SAM has also been shown to measure appraisal as it is described by transactional theories of appraisal, indicating construct validity (Carpenter, 2016). Ultimately, the SAM is a reliable and valid measure of cognitive appraisals of stress.

State Hope

The State Hope Scale was used to measure hope levels related to individuals' current thoughts toward their unemployment experience (Snyder et al., 1996). The State Hope Scale is a self-report measure consisting of six items—three that measure agency, and three that measure pathways. For example, participants are given statements such as "at the present time, I am energetically pursuing my goals" and "I can think of many ways to reach my current goals" (Snyder, 1994, p. 69). Participants were asked to rate each statement on a scale of 1-8 where 1 = definitely false, 2 = mostly false, 3 = somewhat false, 4 = slightly false, 5 = slightly true, 6 = somewhat true, 7 = mostly true, and 8 = definitely true. To examine state hope related specifically to one's experience with unemployment, the original statements were edited to reflect the context of unemployment, rather than asking participants to think generally of the challenges they were facing at the current moment.

The State Hope Scale has demonstrated excellent reliability and validity. Snyder et al., (1996) asked participants to take the State Hope Scale each day for 30 days, and the average Cronbach's alpha was .93, signifying high internal consistency. In addition, both the agency and pathways subscales had average Cronbach's alpha scores of .91, indicating that the subscales are also internally consistent measures. Specifically, this study exhibited alphas of .91 for the overall scale, .86 for the agency subscale, and .84 for the pathways subscale. Snyder et al. (1996) also found that agency and pathways were positively correlated, with correlations between .50-.76 depending on the day (p<.001), displaying internal reliability as hope theory

argues the subconstructs are related to one another. Finally, the State Hope Scale has

demonstrated convergent validity with dispositional hope, state self-esteem, state positive affect,

state negative affect, and daily reports of event valences (Snyder et al., 1996). Yet, results also

indicated discriminant validity, as state hope was shown to be unique compared to the other

scales concurrently tested. Thus, the State Hope Scale is a reliable and valid measure.

Procedure

This study measured cross-sectional questionnaire data collected using Qualtrics. Seeing

as the survey was electronic and distributed over a variety of asynchronous channels, time of day

and location should not hold significant weight on participants' answers. Thus, we did not

attempt to control for setting-related variables.

When participants clicked on the Qualtrics link, they were first be prompted to read and

agree/disagree to an informed consent statement (Appendix A). If they selected "No, I do not

consent to participate in this research project," they saw the following message and their survey

ended: "Thank you for your willingness to participate in this survey. Unfortunately, you do not

meet the eligibility criteria for this study. If you have any questions regarding this survey, you

may contact the Primary Investigator, Rylee Walter, at rylee.walter@umontana.edu, or the

project's faculty advisor, Dr. Stephen Yoshimura, at stephen.yoshimura@mso.umt.edu."

Participants who selected "Yes, I consent to participate in this research study" were

permitted to enter the survey. The first block asked participants if they were currently

unemployed or employed. They saw the following message:

> According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015), someone is *unemployed* if (1)
>
> they do not currently have a job, (2) they are searching for a job, <u>and</u> (3) they are
>
> available for work (unless they are temporarily ill). The BLS also considers those who

have been laid off and are waiting to be called back to work as unemployed, regardless of whether they are seeking new work.

Alternatively, someone is *employed* if they do any work for profit or pay, including more than 15 hours per week of unpaid labor at a household member's farm or business, <u>or</u> if they are temporarily absent from their job due to illness, maternity/paternity leave, or labor dispute, whether or not they are paid for their time away from work.

If a participant selected "I am employed," their questionnaire ended, and they saw the same message as if they had selected "no" regarding the informed consent (see above). If a participant selected "I am unemployed," they were able to continue the survey. The next block prompted them to answer a few questions about their unemployment status, including the length of time they had worked at their previous job, the length of their current unemployment spell, the average amount of time they spend searching for a new job each week, and whether they intend to make major career-related changes as a result of their unemployment experience. These questions were included to serve two purposes. First, they further foregrounded the context of the study in the participants' minds. Second, they offer potential for discovering connections between concrete aspects of unemployment itself and participants' experiences with support, appraisal, and hope.

After completing the brief unemployment information questions, participants then moved on to the included measures, each in a separate block. All measures and instructions are included in full in the appendix section at the end of this document. In a random order to control for survey fatigue, participants completed the ISEL (Appendix B), the PANAS (Appendix C), the SAM (Appendix D), and the State Hope Scale (Appendix E). After completing the fourth measure, participants were prompted to complete a short, standard demographics section before

being thanked for their time. The demographic questions asked participants to identify their age group, gender identity, ethnicity, highest level of education completed, marital status, number of dependents, current (i.e., after job loss) annual household income, and whether they were receiving state and/or federal unemployment benefits.

Upon finishing the demographics section, participants saw the following message: "Thank you for participating in this survey. Your responses have been recorded. It is only with your willingness to volunteer that we are able to learn more about how people navigate difficult circumstances, such as unemployment. If you have any questions regarding this survey, you may contact the Primary Investigator, Rylee Walter, at rylee.walter@umontana.edu, or the project's faculty advisor, Dr. Stephen Yoshimura, at stephen.yoshimura@mso.umt.edu." When participants navigated to this page, they had reached the end of the questionnaire. Finally, about two months after data collection, participants from the largest data collection effort were thanked and given a brief synopsis of the study via public posts the online communities from which they were recruited.

Results

All hypotheses and supplemental analyses were tested using hierarchical linear regression models, with the length of time a participant had been unemployed entered in the first step as a control variable. Length of unemployment was used as a control variable to control for the possibility that those who had been unemployed (and thus had been unsuccessfully searching for a new job) for a longer period of time could be less hopeful than someone who was newly unemployed.

The first hypothesis predicted that the amount of overall functional support one perceived as available would negatively relate to their stress appraisal levels. The results indicated no

significant effect of support on stress appraisal when controlling for length of unemployment (F

[1, 229] = 2.58, p = NS).

Although overall functional support did not predict stress appraisals, we explored the

possibility that specific types of support might do so (see Table 2). Thus, a secondary analysis

using the specific types of functional support as the independent variables and the composite

measure of stress appraisal as the dependent variable indicated an overall effect (F [4, 226] =

3.24, p < .01, R^2 = .07, R^2_{change} = .05), but that only appraisal support negatively associated with

stress appraisal levels, while controlling for unemployment (β = .35, p < .01). Thus, H1 received

partial support.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that unemployed individuals' stress appraisal levels would

negatively relate to their state hope levels. The results indicated an overall significant effect of

stress appraisal on hope (F [2, 227] = 3.23, p < .05, R^2 = .03, R^2_{change} = .01). However, contrary

to the hypothesis, stress appraisal did not predict hope (β = -.08, p = NS). Only length of

unemployment was a significant predictor of hope (β = -.14, p < .05). Thus, when controlling

for unemployment length, H2 was not supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the amount of overall functional support one perceived as

available would positively relate to their state hope level. The results indicated an overall

significant effect of support on hope (R = .53, F [4, 226] = 45.51, p < .001, R^2 = .29, R^2_{change} =

.26) (see Table 3). When controlling for unemployment length, support positively predicted

hope (β = .53, p < .001) and length of unemployment did not predict hope (β = -.04, p = NS).

Thus, H3 was fully supported.

Because overall functional support was positively related to hope, we tested the

possibility that the four individual types of support would also independently predict hope

overall and the two components of hope, agency and pathways. First, we conducted a secondary

analysis with the four types of functional support entered as the independent variables and the

overall hope measure as the dependent variable (see Table 4). The results indicated an overall

significant effect of the four types of support on hope (F [4, 226] = 37.36, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .45$,

$R^2_{change} = .43$). Appraisal support ($\beta = .30$, $p < .01$) and esteem support ($\beta = .70$, $p < .001$)

positively predicted hope, while belonging support ($\beta = -.24$, $p < .05$) negatively predicted hope.

Second, we also looked at whether the individual support types would have an effect on

the two components of hope, pathways and agency, separately. Both of these secondary analyses

were conducted with the four types of functional support entered as the independent variables

and either hope (pathways) or hope (agency) as the dependent variable. The results indicated

overall significant effects of the four types of support on both pathways (F [5, 225] = 35.35, $p <$

.001, $R^2 = .44$, $R^2_{change} = .42$) and agency (F [5, 225] = 27.25, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .38$, $R^2_{change} = .36$).

Specifically, esteem support predicted both pathways ($\beta = .61$, $p < .001$) and agency ($\beta = .70$, $p <$

.001), while appraisal support predicted only pathways ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$).

Hypothesis 4 predicted that the amount of overall functional support one perceived as

available would negatively relate to their distress level. We created the "distress" measure by

subtracting positive affect scores from negative affect scores, as high negative and low positive

affect signify distress. The results (see Table 5) indicated an overall significant effect of support

on distress ($R = .43$, F [4, 227] = 25.32, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .18$, $R^2_{change} = .17$). When controlling for

unemployment length, support negatively predicted distress ($\beta = -.43$, $p < .001$), while length of

unemployment did not predict distress ($\beta = .001$, $p = NS$). Thus, H4 was fully supported.

Since overall support was related to distress, we also investigated the possibility that the

four individual types of support could be related to distress. To test this idea, we conducted a

secondary analysis using the four types of functional support as the independent variables and distress as the dependent variable (see Table 7). The results indicated an overall effect of the model (F [5, 226] = 21.95, p < .001, R^2 = .33, R^2_{change} = .32). However, only esteem support significantly predicted distress (β = -.64, p < .001).

Hypothesis 5 predicted that unemployed individuals' state hope levels would negatively relate to their unemployment-related distress levels. The results indicated an overall significant effect of hope on distress (F [2, 227] = 128.41, p < .001, R^2 = .53, R^2_{change} = .52). When controlling for unemployment length, hope negatively predicted distress (β = -.73, p < .001) and length of unemployment did not predict distress (β = -.02, p = NS). Thus, H5 was fully supported.

Because state hope was negatively related to unemployment-related distress, we decided to examine how the individual components of hope, pathways and agency, affected distress as well. We entered hope (agency) and hope (pathways) as the independent variables and distress as the dependent variable, which produced an overall significant model (F [3, 226] = 85.13, p < .001, R^2 = .53, R^2_{change} = .52). Both pathways (β = -.34, p < .001) and agency (β = -.44, p < .001) were negatively related to distress, with agency producing a slightly higher standardized beta score compared to pathways.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that types of enacted support that were related to benign primary and secondary appraisals of unemployment would also be positively associated with higher state hope. In the secondary analysis for H1, we found that only appraisal support was significantly related to the composite stress appraisal measure. Thus, in the regression, we entered appraisal support as the independent variable and hope as the dependent variable, while still controlling for length of unemployment time (see Table 8). The results indicated an overall effect (F [1, 226] =

36.42, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .24$, $R^2_{change} = .22$), showing that appraisal support predicted increased levels of hope ($\beta = .48$, $p < .001$), while unemployment time was unrelated to hope ($\beta = -.05$, $p =$ NS). Thus, H6 received support.

Finally, H7 predicted that the amount of functional support one perceived as available would moderate the relationship between unemployment-related stress appraisals and state hope level. H7 was tested using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (see Figure 1). The results indicated an overall significant effect of the model (F [3, 226] = 30.19, $p < .001$). However, the interaction term was not significant ($\beta = .02$, $p =$ NS). Thus, H7 was not supported.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to understand whether functional support predicted hope and guarded against distress by encouraging reappraisals of unemployment-related challenges. Overall, the results indicated support for some, but not all, hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 received partial support, H3-H6 were fully supported, and H2 and H7 did not receive support.

Specifically, regarding H1, the data showed that overall functional support did not predict stress appraisal. Yet, a secondary analysis examining the associations between specific types of functional support and appraisals revealed that appraisal support negatively predicted stress appraisal. In testing H2, we found that stress appraisal did not predict hope. However, overall support did positively predict hope (H3), as did three individual types of support. Specifically, a secondary analysis for H3 showed that appraisal and esteem support positively predicted hope, while belonging support negatively predicted hope. Next, regarding H4, we found that overall perception of support negatively predicted distress, with a secondary analysis specifically revealing esteem support as a negative predictor as well. Similarly, hope negatively predicted distress as well (H5), with both the agency and pathways components of hope relating to distress.

Testing H6 revealed that appraisal support, which was the only type of support that was related

to stress appraisal (H1 secondary analysis), did predict hope. Finally, for H7, we found that

perceived functional support did not moderate the relationship between stress appraisal and hope,

thus contradicting the notion that the buffering hypothesis would explain the relationship

between stress and hope.

Perhaps the most salient finding was that perceiving support as available predicted state

hopefulness among unemployed people, which we anticipated. However, we also expected

support to moderate the relationship between stress appraisal and hope (H7), with a significant

interaction term signifying the presence of buffering. Instead, H7 was not supported, and we

unexpectedly found not only that stress appraisal played an extremely limited role in the analyses

as a whole, but also that the relationship between overall support and hope is a direct one.

Because support predicted hope and distress directly instead of through an interaction effect (or

through appraisal), these results suggest that the direct effects model explains the relationship

between hope, stress, and support better than the buffering hypothesis does.

The direct (or main) effects model "depicts a negative relationship between social support

and distress that is independent of life stress" (Barrera, 1988, p. 224). The model argues that

support is directly related to mental and physical health because social networks offer positive

experiences and fulfilling social roles, which bolster one's positive affect, perception of stability,

and sense of self-worth (Cohen & Wills, 1985). These support-induced outcomes are

psychologically beneficial because they reduce despair, encourage self-care behaviors, suppress

neuroendocrine responses, and increase access to information or resources that can mitigate the

harmful effects of stress (Cohen et al., 2000).

The key theoretical difference between the stress buffering and direct effects models comes from direct effects' aforementioned independence from life stress. Buffering assumes that support is connected to well-being predominantly in times of high stress, whereas direct effects argues that support meets a basic need for human contact and is thus beneficial regardless of one's current stress level (Cohen et al., 2000; Barrera, 1988). Although the direct effects model has traditionally been linked to structural support (Uchino, 2004), several studies have shown direct effects of enacted support on well-being (see Chen & Feeley, 2012). For example, the model has explained long-term positive relationships between support and positive affect (Murrell et al., 1992) and negative relationships between support and distress (Blaney et al., 1997). In summary, the direct effects model provides a pathway for showing that support itself consistently enhances well-being.

Cohen and Wills (1985) describe a pure direct effect as a situation where a statistical test indicates a significant direct outcome—and an absence of an interaction effect—of social support on an element of psychological well-being. This is the type of pattern we observed in the analyses for this study; the results from H3-H5 revealed significant effects of support on both hope (positive relationship) and distress (negative relationship). In combination with the insignificance of the interaction effects we tested (H7), we believe the findings can best be explained by the direct effects model. Ultimately, we observed that higher perceptions of support predicted higher hope and lower distress, confirming the direct effects model's assumption that support enhances well-being directly.

Another unexpected finding of this study was that belonging support negatively related to hope (H3 secondary analysis). In other words, the perception that one had others to do activities or otherwise spend time with predicted lower overall hope. Although it seems counterintuitive

that any kind of support would decrease one's hope, the context of unemployment may explain

the difference. Being unemployed can cause substantial financial stress, which is evidenced by

over two thirds (70.4%) of participants reporting a post-job loss annual household income of less

than $50,000 and nearly half of participants' households (47.0%) making less than $25,000.

Furthermore, at the time they took the survey, just under half (48.1%) of participants were

receiving federal and/or state unemployment aid. Together, these findings suggest that many

participants were likely facing some degree of financial insecurity. Because many common

activities that indicate belonging support, such as going out to dinner, seeing a movie, or taking a

day trip, require disposable income, unemployed people may feel unable to draw upon belonging

support. Thus, the thought of being invited to do costly activities with others while knowing that

doing so would interfere with other basic needs may be saddening for unemployed people,

therefore associating with less hopeful thoughts related to one's unemployment situation.

Notably, however, while belonging support was associated with lower overall hope, it did

not relate at all to distress. This finding is curious, because one might easily expect that reduced

hope and distress would go together. In the current context, if one could not pay for fun

activities with friends without sacrificing one's basic needs, then one would most certainly

expect them to become distressed. One possible speculative explanation is that other factors

affecting belonging support were at play as well. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic, which

was ongoing during the time this study was conducted, involved both mandated and

recommended restrictions on gatherings and individual safety precautions (variously, depending

on where one lived in the US). These restrictions may have caused participants to not see others

who they would normally spend time or do activities with. Perceiving that belonging support

was available but not being able to draw upon it due to personal or governmental constraints,

then, could have contributed to feelings of hopelessness that participants were already feeling about unemployment, particularly if they were accustomed to relying on belonging support when they felt distressed.

Despite belonging support having a surprisingly negative relationship with hope, the data suggest that appraisal and esteem support are key to mitigating the consequences of unemployment. To review, appraisal support negatively predicted stress appraisals and positively predicted hope, with overall hope negatively predicting distress. Likewise, esteem support positively predicted hope and negatively predicted distress. Given the observation that perceived support necessarily stems from received support (Hobfoll, 2009; Barrera, 1986), these results build a narrative of supportive communication encouraging hopeful thoughts, which, in turn, reduces distress. More specifically, it implies that messages such as a heartfelt "I'm proud of you for persevering through this difficult situation" (esteem support) or "I'm here to listen if you want to talk through what's on your mind" (appraisal support) might help an unemployed individual think hopefully about their situation, resulting in a less distressed affective state. As previously mentioned, hope is particularly advantageous for unemployed individuals; it equips them with the motivation and the mental flexibility to adaptively navigate the uncertainty and changes that accompany job loss. Likewise, distress can hamper those efforts. Therefore, support, and particularly appraisal and esteem support, is instrumental to helping unemployed individuals overcome the challenges they are facing.

Finally, esteem support played an especially essential role in predicting beneficial psychological outcomes. Secondary analyses revealed that esteem support positively predicted overall hope, pathways, and agency (H3) and negatively predicted distress (H4). These results highlight the importance of unemployed individuals having esteem support available and, by

extension, receiving esteem-building messages such as, "You are working through this really difficult situation extremely well" or "I am confident you will be able to find another position, even though the search has seemed fruitless lately." Considering Cohen and Wills' (1985) argument that the direct effects model contends that support enhances self-worth as a means of enriching well-being, it makes sense that esteem support emerged as a driving force of higher hope and less distress in unemployed individuals.

Implications

This study offers several contributions to the support, hope, and unemployment literature. Theoretically, this study confirms that the known positive relationship between functional support and dispositional hope exists at the state hope level as well. To our knowledge, this is the first study to measure perceived availability of functional support and state hope together. It also adds to the relatively small pool of research showing direct effects of functional support on wellbeing by way of lessening distress. Broadly, it shows that functional support does predict state hope and reduce distress, showcasing the possibility that receiving sufficient support could alter one's momentary hope, at least in the context of unemployment. Thus, this study opens the door for more work to be done regarding the malleability of state hope and the kinds of supportive messages that might encourage shifts in hope cognitions.

In a more practical sense, the results of this study offer some potential insight into how to reduce the distress felt by unemployed people, or at least those who are willing to volunteer for a study about it. Others have pointed out that measures of perceived functional support "are actually addressing 'perceived-received support' because those measures rely on retrospective evaluations" (Barrera, 1986, p. 417; Hobfoll, 2009). As such, one can reasonably assume that this study's findings for perceived support would translate to received support as well.

Therefore, knowing that (a) overall, appraisal, and esteem support all positively predict hope, (b) overall and esteem support negatively predict distress, and that (c) hope negatively predicts stress, one could deduce the kinds of messages that are likely to help an unemployed person think and feel better about their situation, such as the aforementioned examples of unemployment-related esteem and appraisal support. As previously mentioned, hopeful thinking prepares unemployed people facing the challenges associated with job loss with the willpower and the waypower to move forward. In short, hopefulness is adaptive in times of unemployment, so the finding that support predicts hope offers a way for people to help others unlock the benefits of hope when they are not inclined to think hopefully on their own.

Aside from the overall measure of support, esteem support emerged as the "winner" when it comes to encouraging hopeful thinking and combatting distress. Esteem support negatively predicted distress and positively predicted overall hope, as well as both agency and pathways. Because both components of hope are necessary to produce hopeful cognitions (Snyder, 1994) and to ward off unemployment-related distress, esteem support appears to be the best choice for unemployed individuals, especially in situations where the support giver may not know which link in the hope chain is weakest. Esteem support relates to both agency and pathways because messages that display pride in who someone is and belief in their capabilities likely boosts one's willpower to address the challenge, as well as their waypower that they can find a path forward. So, sending messages that build one's esteem may be the safest bet when trying to help an unemployed person think more hopefully and feel less distressed.

Limitations and Future Research

As with any study, there are several limitations that need to be considered. First, we would be remiss if we did not consider how the COVID-19 pandemic could have influenced the

data, as the data collection for this study occurred during March and April of 2021, around which time vaccines were not yet sufficiently available to allow for a full recovery of employment. Furthermore, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021) estimated that the mass business closures and layoffs early in the pandemic caused the US unemployment rate to skyrocket from 3.5% to roughly 15% between January and April of 2020. While the unemployment rate dropped after its high in April 2020, it remained steady at around 6% in the first quarter of 2021, which is still significantly higher than the relatively consistent 3.5% pre-pandemic unemployment rate. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused spikes in loneliness, particularly among millennials (Ducharme, 2020). Thus, with unemployment at a recent high and people feeling more isolated than usual, distress, support, and hope could all easily have been affected by the pandemic. Alternatively, participants may have felt more distressed or less hopeful about unemployment than they might have without the general stress of the pandemic coloring nearly every aspect of life for a year, especially considering the sweeping financial consequences felt by millions of Americans (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2021). Overall, despite asking participants to consider their current unemployment situation for each measure, it remains possible that general pandemic experiences informed responses.

In addition to the potential influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study was also subject to several measurement-related limitations. First, the self-report methods and cross-sectional design mean our analyses are subject to self-report bias or other unforeseen differences due to setting. Moreover, without longitudinal or experimental data, the relationships between variables cannot be assumed to be causational. Similarly, the volunteer-based nature of the sample inherently risks self-selection bias. Finally, despite the overall strength in reliability

across measures, the composite SAM displayed slightly less than acceptable reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .68.

One additional limitation is the relationship between our sample data and the BLS' April 2021 unemployment population data. As previously mentioned, the demographics for this study were not consistent with the demographic data for the United States' unemployed population, as our study was predominately White and female, whereas the BLS reported a population that was predominately male and with White folks as having the smallest unemployment rate of any race.

Future research could address some of these limitations by utilizing an experimental design, which would clarify whether a causational relationship between functional support and state hope and/or distress exists. Should they exist, causal relationships between these variables would strengthen the evidence for support as a positive predictor of psychological well-being in general and of hope specifically. Relatedly, despite the presumed link between perceived and received support (see Hobfoll, 2009; Barrera, 1986), an additional benefit of experimental or longitudinal research would be pinpointing which types of received supportive messages benefit unemployed individuals the most. The demographic data of this study combined with national unemployment trends point to significant struggle associated with unemployment—and to millions of Americans who are desperate for any sort of relief from the stress and pain caused by job loss. Because our data indicate that perceived availability of functional support and overall hope negatively predict distress, work that digs deeper into unemployment-specific support attempts may uncover strategies that others could use to help reduce the negative impacts of unemployment in their friends or family members. However, on the other hand, expanding this line of research outside of the context of unemployment could build a more comprehensive narrative regarding how support and hope are related as well.

Conclusion

Often unexpected and necessitating major life changes, unemployment is an unignorable, all-encompassing stressor for millions of Americans each year. The results of this study plant the seeds for identifying patterns of supportive messages that could mitigate that distress. Ultimately, this study showed that perceived functional support positively predicted hope and negatively predicted distress using the direct effects model. These findings carry theoretical implications for the communicative and psychological processes that inform hope, support, and distress. Yet, they also highlight a key practical takeaway for communicating with unemployed individuals: offering support, and particularly esteem support, may jumpstart hope cognitions, which help them manage the challenges of unemployment and protect them from feeling distressed. Broadly speaking, this study points to the importance of perceiving and, consequentially, receiving support while navigating life-altering changes such as unemployment. So, while thinking hopefully may not be as easy as the opening quotation for this paper suggests on its own, those facing unemployment may find hope by knowing they have support as they manage the changes and uncertainties associated with job loss.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research project about goals, stress, and support during periods of unemployment. This online survey should take 10-15 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary, and responses will be kept anonymous. Participation or nonparticipation will not impact your relationship with the University of Montana.

Though your participation has no direct benefit to you, it will help us understand more about your feelings and experiences related to unemployment. You will have the option to skip any question you do not want to answer. Submission of this survey will be interpreted as your informed consent to participate and your confirmation that you are at least 18 years old.

If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact Rylee Walter via email at rylee.walter@umontana.edu or the faculty advisor, Dr. Stephen Yoshimura, at stephen.yoshimura@mso.umt.edu. For questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Montana Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (406) 243-6672.

Please print or save a copy of this page for your records.

*I have read the above information, agree to participate in this research project, and certify that I am at least 18 years old. [Yes/No]

Appendix B

Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL)

First, participants will see this message: "Next, we are going to ask you about your

relationships. Think of your family, friends, acquaintances, etc. as you consider these

statements. Please respond to all statements." Next, they will see the instructions and questions

directly from the ISEL (Cohen et al., 1985): "This scale is made up of a list of statements, each

of which may or may not be true about you. For each statement, check "definitely true" if you

are sure it is true about you and "probably true" if you think it is true but are not absolutely

certain. Similarly, you should check "definitely false" if you are sure the statement is false and

"probably false" if you think it is false but are not absolutely certain."

0 = definitely false, 1 = probably false, 2 = probably true, 3 = definitely true

(On Qualtrics, options presented as a Likert-type bubble index next to each question)

1. There are several people that I trust to help me solve my problems.

2. If I needed help fixing an appliance or repairing my car, there is someone who would

    help me.

3. Most of my friends are more interesting than I am.

4. There is someone who takes pride in my accomplishments.

5. When I feel lonely, there are several people I can talk to.

6. There is no one that I feel comfortable talking to about intimate personal problems.

7. I often meet or talk with family or friends.

8. Most people I know think highly of me.

9. If I needed a ride to the airport very early in the morning, I would have a hard time finding someone to take me.

10. I feel like I'm not always included by my circle of friends.

11. There really is no one who can give me an objective view of how I'm handling my problems.

12. There are several people I enjoy spending time with.

13. I think that my friends feel that I'm not very good at helping them solve their problems.

14. If I were sick and needed someone (friend, family member, or acquaintance) to take me to the doctor, I would have trouble finding someone.

15. If I wanted to go on a trip for a day (e.g., to the mountains, beach, or country), I would have a hard time finding someone to go with me.

16. If I needed a place to stay for a week because of an emergency (for example, water or electricity out in my apartment or house), I could easily find someone who would put me up.

17. I feel like there is no one I can share my most private worries and fears with.

18. If I were sick, I could easily find someone to help me with my daily chores.

19. There is someone I can turn to for advice about handling problems with my family.

20. I am as good at doing things as most other people are.

21. If I decide one afternoon that I would like to go to a movie that evening, I could easily find someone to go with me.

22. When I need suggestions on how to deal with a personal problem, I know someone I can turn to.

23. If I needed an emergency loan of $100, there is someone (friend, relative, or acquaintance) I could get it from.

24. In general, people do not have much confidence in me.

25. Most people I know do not enjoy the same things that I do.

26. There is someone I could turn to for advice about making career plans or changing my job.

27. I don't often get invited to do things with others.

28. Most of my friends are more successful at making changes in their lives than I am.

29. If I had to go out of town for a few weeks, it would be difficult to find someone who would look after my house or apartment (the plants, pets, garden, etc.).

30. There is really no one I can trust to give me good financial advice.

31. If I wanted to have lunch with someone, I could easily find someone to join me.

32. I am more satisfied with my life than most people are with theirs.

33. If I was stranded 10 miles from home, there is someone I could call who would come and get me.

34. No one I know would throw a birthday party for me.

35. It would be difficult to find someone would lend me their car for a few hours.

36. If a family crisis arose, it would be difficult to find someone who could give me good advice about how to handle it.

37. I am closer to my friends than most other people are to theirs.

38. There is at least one person I know whose advice I really trust.

39. If I needed some help moving to a new house or apartment, I would have a hard time finding someone to help me.

40. I have a hard time keeping pace with my friends.

Appendix C

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)

Consistent with the PANAS instructions, the directions for this block will include the "moment"-specific directions (Watson et al., 1988). To keep participants' focus on unemployment, the directions will also incorporate the context of participants' unemployment experiences. The instructions are as follows: "This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer next to that word. Indicate *to what extent you feel this way as result of your unemployment situation right now*; that is, in the present moment. Use the following scale to record your answers for each item."

1 = very slightly or not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = moderately, 4 = quite a bit, and 5 = extremely.

(On Qualtrics, options presented as a Likert-type bubble index next to each question)

1. Interested

2. Distressed

3. Excited

4. Upset

5. Strong

6. Guilty

7. Scared

8. Hostile

9. Enthusiastic

10. Proud

11. Irritable

12. Alert

13. Ashamed

14. Inspired

15. Nervous

16. Determined

17. Attentive

18. Jittery

19. Active

20. Afraid

Appendix D

Stress Appraisal Measure (SAM)

Adapted from Peacock and Wong's (1990) original instructions, the directions for this page will read, "Next, this questionnaire is concerned with your thoughts about various aspects of your unemployment experience. There are no right or wrong answers. Please respond according to how you view this situation right now. Please answer all questions. Answer each question by selecting the option that best represents your current feelings toward unemployment."

1 = not at all, 2 = slightly, 3 = moderately, 4 = considerably, 5 = extremely

(On Qualtrics, options presented as a Likert-type bubble index next to each question)

1. Is this a totally hopeless situation?

2. Does this situation create tension in me?

3. Is the outcome of this situation uncontrollable by anyone?

4. Is there someone or some agency I can turn to for help if I need it?

5. Does this situation make me feel anxious?

6. Does this situation have important consequences for me?

7. Is this going to have a positive impact on me?

8. How eager am I to tackle this problem?

9. How much will I be affected by the outcome of this situation?

10. To what extent can I become a stronger person because of this problem?

11. Will the outcome of this situation be negative?

12. Do I have the ability to do well in this situation?

13. Does this situation have serious implications for me?

14. Do I have what it takes to do well in this situation?

15. Is there help available to me for dealing with this problem?

16. Does this situation tax or exceed my coping resources?

17. Are there sufficient resources available to help me in dealing with this situation?

18. Is it beyond anyone's power to do anything about this situation?

19. To what extent am I excited thinking about the outcome of this situation?

20. How threatening is this situation?

21. Is the problem unresolvable by anyone?

22. Will I be able to overcome the problem?

23. Is there anyone who can help me manage this problem?

24. To what extent do I perceive this situation as stressful?

25. Do I have the skills necessary to achieve a successful outcome to this situation?

26. To what extent does this event require coping effort on my part?

27. Does this situation have long-term consequences for me?

28. Is this going to have a negative impact on me?

Appendix E

State Hope Scale

The last measure before the general demographics section, the State Hope Scale, will be framed as asking about goals, per Snyder et al.'s (1996) recommendation. Based on those of Snyder et al.'s (1996) original measure, the following directions will be provided to the participants: "Next, we would like you to reflect on your goals related to employment. Using the scale shown below, please select the number that best describes *how you think about yourself right now in light of your experience with unemploymen*t and fill in the bubble associated with the number that represents your feelings. *Please take a few moments to focus on yourself and your current mindset toward your employment situation. Once you have this "here and now" mindset*, go ahead and answer all six items according to the following scale:"

1 = definitely false, 2 = mostly false, 3 = somewhat false, 4 = slightly false, 5 = slightly true, 6 = somewhat true, 7 = mostly true, and 8 = definitely true

(On Qualtrics, options presented as a Likert-type bubble index next to each question)

1. If I should find myself in a jam, I could think of many ways to get out of it.

2. At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my goals.

3. There are lots of ways around any problem that I am facing right now.

4. Right now, I see myself as being pretty successful.

5. I can think of many ways to reach my current goals.

6. At this time, I am meeting the goals that I have set for myself.

TABLES & FIGURES

Table 1

Types of Functional Support

Grouping of Support	Type of Support	Definition	Example
Action-Facilitating Support	Informational (including Appraisal) Support	Offering advice, information, or different ways to approach to the issue	"I can see you're upset about losing your glasses—have you tried looking under the couch?"
	Tangible (Instrumental) Support	Offering goods or services to aid in resolving the issue	"It looks like you have too much on your plate. Would you like me to drop the kids off at soccer tonight so you can focus on other things?"
Nurturant Support	Emotional Support	Expressing concern for someone through messages of care, value, and acceptance	"It seems like you've been feeling down lately, so I wanted to remind you that I care about you and love you just as you are."
	Esteem Support	Expressing confidence in one's abilities or accomplishments	"It sounds like you're feeling overwhelmed by the final exam, but I know you can do it, and I'm proud of you for taking a class this difficult."
	Network (Belonging) Support	Expressing connection by establishing a network of people to do activities with	"Want to grab dinner with me tonight? I'd love to hear about your week!"

Table 2

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Types of Functional Support Predicting
Composite Stress Appraisal Levels (H1, supplemental analysis)

Variables	ß	t	R	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1			.13	.02	
Unemployment time	.13	2.04*			
Step 2			.26	.07	.05
Unemployment time	.12	1.88			
Appraisal support	.35	2.68**			
Tangible support	-.18	-1.49			
Esteem support	-.19	-1.94			
Belonging support	-.07	-.47			

Note: *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

Table 3

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Composite Functional Support Predicting
State Hope Level (H3)

Variables	ß	t	R	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1			.15	.02	
Unemployment time	-.15	-2.24*			
Step 2			.53	.29	.26
Unemployment time	-.04	-.63			
Overall functional support	.53	9.17***			

Note: *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

Table 4

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Types of Functional Support Predicting Composite State Hope (H3, supplemental analysis)

Variables	ß	t	R	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1			.15	.02	
Unemployment time	-.15	-2.24*			
Step 2			.67	.45	.43
Unemployment time	-.05	-1.05			
Appraisal support	.30	3.03**			
Tangible support	-.13	-1.46			
Esteem support	.70	9.27***			
Belonging support	-.24	-2.10*			

Note: *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

Table 5

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Composite Functional Support Predicting Distress (H4)

Variables	ß	t	R	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1			.09	.01	
Unemployment time	.09	1.38			
Step 2			.43	.18	.17
Unemployment time	.001	.02			
Overall functional support	-.43	-6.95***			

Note: *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

Table 6

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Types of Functional Support Predicting Distress (H4, supplemental analysis)

Variables	ß	t	R	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1			.09	.01	
Unemployment time	.09	-1.38			
Step 2			.57	.38	.32
Unemployment time	.025	.45			
Appraisal support	-.05	-.45			
Tangible support	-.19	1.92			
Esteem support	-.64	-7.68***			
Belonging support	-.01	-.08			

Note: *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

Table 7

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for State Hope Predicting Distress (H5)

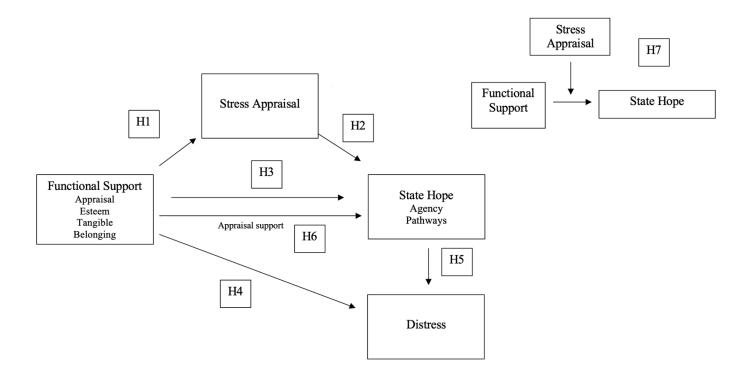| Variables	ß	t	R	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1			.09	.01	
Unemployment time	.09	1.37			
Step 2			.73	.53	.52
Unemployment time	-.02	-.36			
State Hope	-.73	-15.90***			

Note: *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

Table 8

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Appraisal Support Predicting Hope Level (H6)

Variables	ß	t	R	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1			.15	.02	
Unemployment time	-.15	-2.24*			
Step 2			.49	.24	.22
Unemployment time	-.05	-.82			
Appraisal Support	.48	-8.15***			

Note: *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

Figure 1: Model of all hypotheses

Note: H1 received partial support, H3-6 were fully supported, and H2 and H7 (that stress appraisals moderate the relationship between functional support and state hope) were not supported. Secondary analyses for H1 tested the four types of support on stress appraisal, for H3 tested the four types of support on hope (composite, agency, and pathways), for H4 tested the four types of support on distress, and for H5 tested the two components of hope on distress.