

LEVELS OF RESOURCEFULNESS AND MOTIVATION AS THEY RELATE TO
SALES FORCE SUCCESS: AN EXAMINATION OF CORRELATES
USING THE HOPE THEORY

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This study sought to determine whether a relationship existed between individual salesperson's levels of goal-directed cognition and motivation and their professional success as determined by the percentage of sales goals achieved. Salespersons represented two companies with national sales forces: one from the financial services industry and one from the apparel manufacturing industry. Both groups of salespeople were responsible for complex selling tasks. The skill sets for these professionals included high levels of communication skills, extensive product knowledge, and competitive market knowledge.

Survey research, both paper and pencil and online, was conducted using the Hope Scale developed by C. R. Snyder and associates (1991). Hope is defined as a two-dimensional construct of goal-directed thinking: resourcefulness, thoughtful planning to overcome obstacles to goals, and motivation, cognition to sustain momentum toward goal achievement. Theoretically, upon assessing salespersons' Hope scores, organizations would be better prepared to assist those with low Hope Scale Scores (HSS) in one of the two areas. Those with low resourcefulness scores could be trained in cognitive techniques to overcome obstacles to goal achievement. Those with low motivational scores would be identified for further analysis, from a developmental perspective, to better determine

what personally initiates and sustains motivation to attain their goals (Snyder, 1991).

This study affirmed two of three parts of the hope theory with regard to salespeople. High Hope scores showed significant correlations with high goal achievement, as did one of the subset scores, motivation. The resourcefulness subset score did not correlate significantly with high goal achievement, and also produced low reliability scores.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Significance of Study	1
Background	2
The Purpose of the Study	4
Theoretical Framework	4
Hypotheses	5
Limitations	6
Delimitations	6
Assumptions	6
Definition of Terms	7
Summary	10
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	11
Motivation	11
Resourcefulness in Goal Attainment and Problem Solving	16
Hope and the Hope Theory	23
Summary	26
3. METHODOLOGY	27
Overview	27

Population	27
Sample	28
Instrumentation	28
Reliability	30
Validity	31
Data Collection	31
Analysis of Data	32
Summary	34
4. FINDINGS	36
Population of Interest	36
The Study Sample	37
Instrumentation	39
Study Data and Statistical Analysis	40
Analysis of Hypotheses	43
5. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	47
Discussion	47
Conclusions	54
Recommendations	55
APPENDIXES	57
REFERENCES	64

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE

1.	Descriptive Statistics of Participants and Survey Response Rates	37
2.	Number of Respondents by Years as Sales Professional and Years of Sales Experience in Respective Industry	39
3.	Levene's Independent Sample Tests for Equality of Means	41
4.	Independent Sample t-test for Equality of Means	43
5.	Correlations (r) of Hope Scale Scores, Resourcefulness Subset Scores, Motivation Subset Scores, and 2001 Sales Goal Achieved	45
6.	Summary of Sales Groups by Dependent Variable Group Mean Score Statistics	46

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Significance of Study

This study sought to determine whether a relationship existed between individual salespersons' levels of goal-directed cognition and motivation and their professional success as determined by the percentage of sales goals achieved. Salespersons represented two companies with national sales forces: one from the financial services industry and one from the apparel manufacturing industry. Both groups of salespeople are responsible for complex selling tasks that include such work as contacting clients, developing strong customer relationships, managing periodic reporting responsibilities, and, in some cases, planning sales territory management issues, supervising and training other salespersons or staff, and community relations activities. The skill sets for these professionals include both extensive product knowledge and competitive market knowledge.

A survey of salespeople from the two organizations was used to measure the level of goal-directed components, resourcefulness, and motivations. The measurement instrument used was the Hope Scale developed by Snyder et al. (1991). The results can be generalized to sales forces in similar industries. The level of sales success as interpreted by the percentage of sales goal achieved was compared to information provided in a self-reporting survey instrument.

Upon assessing salespersons' scores on hope, organizations would be better prepared to assist those with low Hope Scale scores (HSS) in one of the two areas. Those with low resourcefulness scores could be trained in cognitive techniques to assist them in

overcoming obstacles to goal achievement. Those with low motivational scores could be identified for further analysis from a developmental perspective to better determine what personally initiates and sustains motivation (Snyder et al., 1991) to attain set goals. Increasing individual scores would equate to developing more successful salespersons by enhancing their abilities to address challenges in the work place.

Background

Many organizations rely on sales to generate revenue. In a variety of settings, managers are faced with getting more service and sales effort from fewer people and fewer assets (Skinner, 2000). Through the years, it has been believed that certain human aspects and characteristics appear to set some salespeople apart from others. Salesperson skill sets may be credited. Physical characteristics and personal factors have been examined as attributes that account for stellar performance (Churchill, Ford, Hartley, & Walker, 1985).

While some research points to a more competitive environment (Brown, Cron, & Slocum, 1998), self-confidence, aptitude, and motivation are considered cognitive sets (Churchill et al., 1985) that may hold the secret of excellence. These cognitive sets have been used to examine newly recruited salespeople and seasoned veterans to identify traits of success. Yet the question remains as to why a select group of individuals will outperform their colleagues. The search continues as companies report mixed success in their attempt to develop screening and training programs to reduce costs and bolster results that compress learning curves and accelerate productivity curves.

Perhaps the answer goes beyond training, planning and preparation, and territory

alignment. Perhaps it goes beyond what some scholars consider an optimistic attitude (Snyder et al., 1991). The literature on cognitive sets and personality traits is scant with regard to the performance of salespeople because it often is relative to their behavior as it relates to individual organization goals (Morris, LaForge, & Allen, 1994). Most measures of success rely on historical performance as it relates to past sales, profit, or margins achieved.

The combined cognitive processes of resourcefulness in goal attainment and motivation, otherwise known as *hope*, as it is referred to in this study, are believed to hold answers as to why some salespeople excel when others do not. According to Snyder, hope is comprised of two components, agency and pathways, which are reciprocal, additive, and positively related. (Snyder et al., 1991). Developer of the hope theory, Snyder considers agency to be the motivation to accomplish a goal whereas pathway is the level of individual resourcefulness to goal achievement. This understanding of hope has far-reaching benefits to business, particularly in the field of training and development.

Traditionally, goal setting has involved training individuals to write statements that include goals and objectives that are attainable, measurable, and are set in a time frame that can be used as a measurement for assessment. It is presumed that persons capable of setting goals will have a skill set that allows them to realize accomplishing the goal. The Hope Scale posits that goal accomplishment is more than a behavioral skill set; it is also a cognitive set. The ability to accomplish goals hinges on both the level of motivation as well as a person's ability and resourcefulness to overcome obstacles that may impede goal attainment. As with positive imagery, people with high hope envision

goal accomplishment as a given; it will happen.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a statistically significant relationship exists between salesperson success as defined by the percentage attained concerning their sales goals and Hope Scale scores. Negative relationships serve as identifiers for needs assessment in the training and development of salespersons.

Theoretical Framework

An examination of theories that consider cognitive sets when attempting to explain or predict phenomena with regard to motivations and goal achievement has been conducted through meta-analysis (Bagozzi, Baumgartn, & Pieters, 1998; Churchill et al., 1985). Reportedly, experimental research designs have been used in many of these. The hope theory posits that independent measures of traits such as motivation and goal setting are insufficient to explain influence over behavior (Snyder et al., 1991). For instance, motivation as one trait is insufficient to explain successful goal attainment where skill sets may be lacking. Resourcefulness alone may not be sufficient to attain a goal that may lack emotional or motivational value to different individuals.

The hope theory (Snyder et. al., 1991) considers that successful goal-directed behavior results from both the perception of goal-directed determination and the availability of resources or a plan to overcome and work through obstacles that may deter one from attaining goals. Together, these cognitive appraisals can be combined to result in a Hope Scale score. The scores have proven stable over time, and, without

intervention, do not appear to change significantly despite what might be considered emotional occurrences in the lives of respondents. Although the hope theory has been applied and tested in the field of clinical psychology, little application has been made in business settings. Numerous studies of university introductory psychology students have provided evidence of instrument validity and reliability.

Application of this theory to the salesforce could prove to make a considerable contribution to understanding what cognitive sets result in successful selling.

Identification of a low resourcefulness score would alert an organization to the need for additional training in overcoming goal obstacles. Identification of low motivational scores could indicate the need to focus on individual priorities for initiating and sustaining motivation, an issue that would hold further human resource management implications. Organizational development of differing incentive plans or other forms of compensation may be deemed appropriate.

Hypotheses

- H₁ There is no statistically significant relationship between the Hope Scale score and salesperson success as measured by the percentage of sales objectives met.
- H₂ There is no statistically significant relationship between the resourcefulness subset score and salesperson success as measured by the percentage of sales objectives met.
- H₃ There is no statistically significant relationship between the motivation subset score and salesperson success as measured by the percentage of sales objectives met.

H₄ There is no statistically significant difference between salespersons' industry and their Hope Scale scores.

Limitations

Factors affecting the U.S. and world economy, the seasonality of sales, the type of organization providing employment, the type of product sold, organization, and industry changes, as well as antecedents, cannot be controlled for. These factors impact all salespeople and are both common and inherent to the profession. Other limitations included the lack of consideration for individual skills possessed by the sales forces such as communication skills, negotiating talents, level of intelligence, social skills, or degree of personal motivation. Survey research, the chosen method of data collection, carries with it several limiting conditions: uncertainty of gaining honest responses, not knowing whether the desired respondent actually completed the survey, and not knowing whether the respondent consulted others prior to or during completion of the instrument.

Delimitations

Subjects of the study are salespeople involved in carrying out complex sales tasks. The study was limited to salespeople representing two firms: one in financial services and the other an apparel manufacturer. The number of financial services representatives was 104 respondents. Twenty-one apparel representatives participated in the study.

Assumptions

The first assumption was that all salespeople have received corporate training and possess the necessary skill set to successfully carry out their respective sales functions.

This would include techniques on handling clients one-on-one over the telephone or face-to-face and through correspondence, both electronic and printed, as part of the selling process. It was also assumed that training had been received on managing the reporting responsibilities required by each salesperson. The second assumption was that longevity with the organization would have no bearing on individual Hope Scale scores. The third assumption was that the gender of salespersons did not have a bearing on the Hope Scale score either positively or negatively (Snyder et al., 2000).

This study did not attempt to predict the success of salespersons.

Definition of Terms

Agency – subcomponent of the hope model. It is a sense of successful determination in meeting goals and motivation to initiate and sustain effort to achieve goals (Snyder et al., 1991). For the purpose of this study, agency is synonymous with *motivation in achieving goals* and *motivation*.

Client – person or organization with whom a salesperson interacts in the course of business.

Compensation plan – the method of compensation an organization uses to pay the salesperson. The type of plan is commensurate with the expectations of the organization. A commission-only plan would place an emphasis on the selling process. Straight salary would emphasize ongoing relationships with clients as well as expectations beyond completing sales quickly. Salary plus commission, the middle ground, would indicate rewards for selling and organizational expectations of managing ongoing relationships with clients.

Hope – bi-dimensional construct consisting of agency and pathways (Snyder et al., 1991) or motivation to achieve a goal and goal-directed resourcefulness, respectively.

Hope Scale score – numerical total of Hope Scale subsets of motivation and goal-directed resourcefulness ranging from 8 to 64.

Motivation – the amount of effort salespersons plan to expend on tasks associated with their jobs (Walker, Churchill, & Ford, 1977). For the purpose of this study, *motivation* is synonymous with *agency*.

Needs analysis – an assessment of individual capabilities or skills to identify shortcomings when compared to requirements of a job.

Pathways – subcomponent of hope theory. A sense of successful goal-directed planning (Snyder et al., 1991). For the purpose of this study, pathways is synonymous with *goal-directed resourcefulness* and *resourcefulness*.

Resourcefulness – subcomponent of hope theory. A cognitive process of goal-directed planning to overcome obstacles to goal achievement. For the purpose of this study, resourcefulness is synonymous with *pathways* (Snyder et al., 1991).

Role ambiguity – individual's lack of knowledge of the most effective behaviors to successfully accomplish a job (Tubre, 2000).

Role conflict – person's beliefs that they are unable to accomplish all that is expected of them (Tubre, 2000).

Salesperson – individual whose primary job responsibilities involve facilitating the exchange process of buying and selling. A professional sales job includes such

activities as contacting clients, developing strong customer relationships, managing periodic reporting responsibilities, and, in some cases, planning sales territory management issues, supervising and training other salespersons or staff, and community relations activities.

Salesperson success – achievement of the 2001 annual sales goal as established by the organization, the salesperson, or a combination of the two.

Self-efficacy – belief that a person has the capabilities needed to reach his or her goals (Brown et al., 1997).

Skill set – job-related knowledge of products, industry, clients, and processes as well as social skills to successfully function in the work place.

Volitions – transformation of emotions to behavior. Includes two components; one is directive and involves planning and selecting appropriate behaviors; the second is motivational by which the individual commits to exerting the necessary effort to attain the goal (Bagozzi et al., 1998).

Summary

Understanding why some individuals are more successful than others at selling is key to this study. Beyond training basic skill sets, it is important to be able to grasp the perceptual level of motivation and resourcefulness or hope that becomes a factor in the cognitive set under which salespeople function. To be able to include this information in a needs analysis would prove valuable to those organizations that strive for continual improvement within the selling process.

This chapter has presented an overview of the proposed study, the background,

purpose, and theoretical framework upon which it is based. Also included are the hypotheses, delimitations and limitations, and the definition of terms.

The remainder of this study contains four chapters. Chapter 2 presents a review of the related literature. Chapter 3 is a description of the methodology used in gathering and analyzing the data. Chapter 4 presents the data findings and analysis, and chapter 5 sets forth the discussion, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines literature related to cognitive sets that have been identified as relevant to the selling profession. For the purpose of this study, particular emphasis has been placed on goal-directed cognition and goal setting, goal-directed behavior, motivation, and problem solving. Finally, the literature on the hope theory by C. R. Snyder and associates is reviewed.

Motivation

Much has been written on human motivation. In 1938, behaviorist B. F. Skinner introduced operant conditioning as a response to a natural stimulus. He found that it was possible to act upon a stimulus and not be aware of it. A stimulus could appear to be unconscious and occur spontaneously. McClelland took this further to show that response to an operant is a more sensitive indicator of motive strength (McClelland, 1987).

In 1943 Hull defined motivation as excitatory potential or the tendency to act on drive strength and habit strength (as cited in McClelland, 1987). He theorized that individuals would move to action because of either a physiological or psychological need or because they were in the habit of taking action. It would be time to eat or, in the case of a professional salesperson, time to call a client for a luncheon engagement.

For the purpose of this study, motivation and goal-directed cognitive processes are considered synonymous. Motivation as defined by Weiner (1980) consists of three components: persistence, intensity, and choice (as cited in Sujan, 1986). According to Sujan, "Salespeople are motivated to work harder by working more hours (persistence),

working more actively (intensity), or working smarter by making different choices” (p. 41). In a nationwide study of salespeople, Sujan (1986) found that a distinction was made between trying harder and working smarter. Trying harder related to the effort put forth by the salesperson. Working smarter dealt with the strategies and the direction with which they used the strategies to accomplish goals. Sujan considered the role of attribution theory in motivation. He hypothesized a causal relationship for intrinsic rewards between strategy and working smarter. Extrinsic rewards were related to effort and working harder. He found that, if salespersons attributed failure to their lack of effort, they would be motivated to work harder. If they attributed failure to poor strategy, they would work smarter. The latter was found to be a more powerful motivator.

To his surprise, Sujan (1986) found that salespeople showed a negative correlation between intrinsic reward and strategy attributions for failure. A post hoc analysis found that intrinsically oriented people in fact believed they had a highly developed set of selling strategies and that continued use of these strategies would result in success. It was believed that these individuals would consider a need for improving strategies if failure resulted. However, they did not attribute failure to either the lack of strategies or the lack of effort, which was within their control, but instead to external factors beyond their control. An example would be the poor economy or poor decision making on the part of a customer. As this relates to factors of hope, one would say these salespeople have hope and expect future success because of past experiences with their strategies.

Emotions as they impact motivation were of interest to Badovick (1990) as he researched salespeople with inadequate sales performance. Using factor analysis, he developed four factors that accounted for 59% of the total variance for emotions: self-blame (personal responsibility), performance satisfaction (generally pleased even after failure), regretful (sorrowful), and blaming others (external blame). Feelings of self-blame and performance satisfaction directly influenced motivation but in opposite directions. Self-blame resulted in increased effort intentions to make the quota next month. The findings relating to performance satisfaction appeared counterintuitive. Feelings of performance satisfaction resulted in a decrease in future intentions to expend more effort, even when the quota had not been met. Badovick theorized that when salespersons were generally satisfied with their performance they may have been ahead of quota for the year-to-date, and not making quota for that month was insignificant to their ultimate goal attainment. Finally, he found that salespeople may not be motivated to expend more effort in cases where they blame others for their failure.

When sales managers were asked about factors contributing to salesperson failures, Morris et al. (1994) found that blame fell to the individual salesperson with the exception of one area, poor training. Sales managers listed lack of initiative, poor planning and organizational skills, lack of enthusiasm, inadequate product knowledge, lack of personal goals, poor listening skills, failure to concentrate on top priorities, and inability to determine client needs as reasons for failure. Responsibility for failure by salespeople was neither assumed by sales managers nor placed on economic conditions.

Organizational culture is believed to impact motivation and ultimately performance. Skinner (2000) reported that 44 % of American workers claimed that they did not put forth effort above what was required to keep their job. He cited examples of workers going above and beyond their duties to use discretionary effort to achieve peak performance. He defined discretionary effort as being that portion of an employee's performance over which he or she has the greatest control. This effort is not necessarily controlled by incentives or bonuses. The organization can create an environment that unleashes discretionary effort. The culture strives to create a climate where employees transcend their own self-interests for the good of the organization.

In organizations where the climate is considered highly competitive, salespeople's self-set goals are influenced. A study by Brown, Cron, and Slocum (1998) examined the goal-setting tendencies of salespeople with high competitiveness traits. Where salespeople perceived a competitive environment, those scoring a high competitiveness trait set higher, more ambitious goals than those with low competitiveness. More ambitious goals equated with better performance. They concluded that hiring more competitive salespeople and fostering a more competitive environment would result in more effective goal setting and better performance.

Lazarus (1991) viewed motivation as an antecedent condition of emotion. Motivation is present only when the individual has a stake in the outcome or goal. Goal hierarchy must be considered, along with the aspects of the individual's ego identity or self-image. He found that one's active goals in an adaptational encounter influence the

individual's choice of coping strategies. According to Lazarus, uncertainty played a major role in motivating one to strive for goal attainment as long as there was goal congruence. This appeared to increase with the probability of doing or thinking something that would change the person-environment relationship. Employee motivation has been related to the perceived level of control. Little control equates to greater stress and ultimately burnout (Snyder, 1994). Stress is not necessarily harmful, depending upon how one handles the stress and copes with it.

In a meta-analysis of 116 articles written over the previous 75 years, Churchill et al. (1985) attempted to identify the most quantitatively specific determinant of salesperson performance. They used six categories into which they classified 1,653 observations: aptitude, skill level, motivation, role, personal factors, and organizational and environmental factors. They found disappointingly small relationships between single predictors of performance and the salesperson's actual performance.

Simple correlations of aptitude were found to range from 0 to .85 (Churchill et al., 1985). This indicated at least a strong relationship in some cases. Weighted mean correlation was found to be only .138. Less than 2 % of the variation in salesperson performance was accounted for by aptitude. Skill levels were only slightly better, with a weighted mean correlation of .268. Research interest in motivation has existed since only the 1950s. Motivation as a predictor was higher than aptitude, with a weighted mean correlation of .184. Role perception first appeared in an empirical study in 1978, and only four such studies had been conducted at the time of the meta-analysis. Weighted mean

correlation was stronger, at .294, and was also more evenly spread about the mean (Churchill et al., 1985).

Personal factors are considered intra-individual factors. Included here are such measures as age, weight, sex, race, appearance, and education. According to Churchill et al. (1985), these personal factors have appeared as the second most prevalent characteristic of interest for researchers and continue to be so. Weighted mean correlation was .161, only slightly stronger than aptitude. Organizational and environmental factors have been concentrated in studies since 1951. This was the lowest weighted mean correlation at .104. Churchill et al. found that performance is influenced by multiple factors. The type of product that salespeople sell strengthens the relationship with major determinants. A salesperson's aptitude has a stronger relationship when selling products rather than services. They also determined that although . . . "individual correlation coefficients in sales performance did not improve over time, the amount of total variance in performance explained by the predictors is greater in the more recent studies that have a multiple-determinant framework" (p. 117).

Resourcefulness in Goal Attainment and Problem Solving

According to Lazarus (1991), through continuous appraisals of the environment and the conditions presented, individuals learn to develop coping styles. Lazarus defined appraisal as how people evaluate the personal significance of what they know or believe. Developing schema or scripts, individuals learn appropriate styles for success in similar situations. This knowledge comes to be used to identify harmful or beneficial conditions

without which persons find themselves in trouble. This cognitive process adds to the development of conscientiousness.

Conscientiousness is one of the Big Five personality factors: extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, intellect, and conscientiousness (Barrick & Mount, 1991). According to the authors, conscientiousness is an important predictor in all jobs; they defined one possessing this personality trait as achievement oriented, organized and able to plan, and persevering. They also included in the definition volitional aspects such as hardworking and persistent. Persons high in conscientiousness have been found to perform better than those low in this area. Along with conscientiousness, extraversion was found to be a good predictor of success in management and sales positions. Barrick and Mount (1991) associated traits such as being sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative, and active with being extraverted. Individuals scoring high in conscientiousness and extraversion perform best in environments that provide high autonomy (Barrick & Mount, 1993).

Within the realm of problem solving, it is also important to consider the impact of role ambiguity on expectancies and performance. Theoretically, role ambiguity and role conflict should negatively impact performance, but Tubre (2000) did not find the literature to support this consistently. He did find that role ambiguity was more prevalent in job types where more decision making is required. Role conflict was more prevalent in less complex jobs. Conscientiousness was a moderator in job performance and conscientiousness reduced role ambiguity in complex jobs. Tubre also found that self-ratings had higher correlations between perceived ambiguity and perceived performance.

There was a perception that, had the role been clearer, the salesperson's performance would have been better. Salespeople were expecting more of themselves, but were not convinced that they had the knowledge needed to maximize their potential.

The organizational climate or culture may have an impact on how the salesperson handles goal attainment and general successes. Lazarus (1991) found that among salespeople anxiety comes from believing that one's good fortune and goal accomplishments will be resented. Some individuals may express guilt over being successful or worry that they may be punished. Perceived or actual peer pressure could negatively affect an individual who should otherwise be experiencing positive feedback. Lazarus also found that goal-congruent emotions such as joy and happiness contribute to the appraisal of challenge, thereby affecting one's choice of coping strategies that were inclined toward generosity, eagerness, and free-flowing use of one's resources. As Brown et al. (1998) considered the superior goal-setting abilities of competitive salespeople, they suggested that managers use such information to determine training needs. Without identifying which came first, competitiveness or effective goal setting, they encouraged managers to train salespeople in how to set effective goals. Otherwise, the salesperson would tend to set do-your-best ineffective goals with no relationship between goal setting and performance.

It was significant that sales managers considered attitudes and actions when examining the attributions of goal attainment or failure for the salesperson. Dubinsky, Skinner, and Whittler (1989) used the attribution theory to better understand the internal

versus external contributors to unsuccessful goal attainment. Much of the credit for failure was dependent upon the salesperson's past work history and the difficulty of the task at hand. Internal factors were selling effort, selling ability, closing skills, and sales call preparation. According to Dubinsky et al., external factors included competitive intensity, inappropriate product, and luck or chance. Internal factors were attributed to low task difficulty failures where sales representatives had poor work histories. Managers were likely to attribute external or environmental factors to failure when the salesperson had a good work history.

Consistent with a previous study, the results indicated that sales managers consider both internal and external information when attributing causes of failure. How the sales managers responded to the representatives was attributed to whether the representative was perceived to have a good work history or a poor one. Responses to the representatives in the event of failure ranged from no response to verbal reprimands and corrective actions of varying degrees (Dubinsky et al., 1989). The actions of sales managers become important to this study because they may deter hopeful thinking and fail to correctly identify the needs of salespeople.

Emotions appear to be an important factor in motivation. Contrary to literature espousing motivation as a rational cognitive process, Brown et al. (1997) found it to be a powerful psychological force that can affect behavior and performance. In a study to investigate effects of goal-directed emotions on salesperson motivation and performance, these authors found that hot cognitions, those for which salespersons had very strong feelings, stimulated planning and effort and promoted enhanced sales performance. They

developed a model based on Lazarus's (1991) cognition theory of emotion and adaptation. The study illustrated their belief that a salesperson's personal stakes in a goal situation triggers anticipation of emotional consequences related to achieving or failing to achieve goals. These anticipatory emotions, both positive and negative, act as powerful motives for which people are willing to plan and expend energy. Anticipatory motives prove stronger than outcome motives. This suggests that positive outcome emotions are not completely dependent upon performance outcome (Brown et al., 1997).

Expectancy theory has proven useful in predicting the direction of goal-directed behavior (Brown et al., 1997). It predicts that motivation will be greatest for job tasks that have the highest probability of leading to the most valued outcomes. Brown et al. considered first the anticipated versus actual emotional responses and the influence that those anticipated emotions have on planning intentions, behaviors, and performance. Secondly, they distinguished between self-relevant cognitive appraisals and attributional explanations that rely on general knowledge. What individuals have at stake triggers the emotions that drive their actions. The greater the personal stakes in the situation, the more emotion they are likely to anticipate experiencing. Personal stakes in the sales context would include income, recognition, respect of others, status, self-respect, autonomy, and possible career advancement. A study of salespersons for a medical supply company revealed that their anticipatory emotions for a promotional offer were often reward enough. Quantitative analysis revealed a positive path from goal-directed behaviors to positive outcome, which suggests that working hard is psychologically rewarding in and

of itself. The study also showed that volitions represented 39% of the variance in goal-directed behaviors. Volitions related to planning territories and strategies were strongly reflective of behaviors. This appeared to represent a strong predictive validity (Brown et al., 1997).

In a study conducted by Bagozzi et al. (1998), personal stakes and anticipatory emotions were found to be predictors of intentions and behaviors leading to dieting, exercise, and weight management in a consumer behavior context. These researchers argued that emotions function to produce action in a way that promotes goal achievement. Emotions motivate, direct, and regulate actions in service to goal pursuit. The literature review of Bagozzi et al. found that few researchers have considered the role of emotions in goal-directed behavior. What was evident was that emotions are evoked when the likelihood of the success of a plan changes. Such interruptions of the expected outcome then lead to problem-solving activities. Existing goal structures are revised, and new plans are made.

Appraisals of situations, either positive or negative, generate an emotional state such as being happy, sad, or anxious. The state of being will either maintain or change the current state. When one experiences fear from uncertainty, there is an assessment of one's ability to cope with the situation or avoid it by moving away. The cycle of emotional experience leads to goal achievement (Bagozzi et al., 1998).

An emotional goal system model was developed by Bagozzi et al. (1998). The first of six phases deals with the goal situation. This consists of a person's subjective assessment of all features of the environment that are relevant to the pursuit of a goal. The

assessment includes whether the situation is one of certainty or uncertainty, the anticipated effort needed, the amount of attention devoted to the situation, one's responsibility and control, the level of perceived personal power, and clarity and familiarity with the situation. The second phase of the model concerns anticipatory emotions. After assessing the situation, the individual considers the prospects of achieving goal success or failing to meet the goal. The authors found that the intensity of the anticipatory emotions plays a crucial role in the subject's motivational potential. The more desirable or undesirable the implications of the event for goal success (goal failure), the more intense the event-related emotions.

From anticipatory emotions, the model moves to volitional processes. Similar to the pathways component of the hope theory of Snyder et al. (1991), volitions deal with what Bagozzi et al. (1998) referred to as directive, motivational, and regulatory functions of goal-directed behavior. Directive means what the individual is trying to do; motivational behavior refers to the mental or physical energy expected to be exerted in pursuit of the goal; and regulatory goal-directed behavior involves planning the steps, monitoring the progress, and guidance and control in the face of goal impediments. Once formed, volitions are stored and called upon as needed.

Instrumental behavior is the fourth phase of the model, which is comprised of three parts. The first considers self-efficacy with regard to means to achieve goals. Does one possess the self-confidence and self-competency to perform? The second part is assessment of instrumental beliefs. Does one believe that there is a likelihood of goal

attainment? The third part deals with the desirability of each means one considers employing. Goal attainment, the fifth phase of the model, is followed by goal outcome emotions. Outcome emotions are updated following each event and stored for future consideration (Bagozzi et al., 1998).

People who hold less value for goals feel less intense positive emotions toward success and less intense negative emotions toward failure (Bagozzi et al., 1998). The personal stakes in the goal serve as a moderator in the emotional outcome of goal achievement or failure.

Hope and the Hope Theory

According to Lazarus (1991) hope is a seemingly goal congruent emotion. However, he found that hope arises from conditions of incongruence. Hope is present when something is desired but the prospects are uncertain. When individuals are in a situation where the odds of accomplishing their goals are against them, they have a desire to attain that goal. Hope sustains constructive effort; however, it can also keep one from cutting their losses and moving on to other endeavors. A comparison of hope and optimism indicates that optimism leaves out the components of yearning and uncertainty that hope embodies (Lazarus, 1991).

Hope is sustained when future expectations are uncertain. The conditions must be unfavorable, but not hopeless. People who have hope are found to move toward an idea or situation rather than away. They remain vigilant, mobilized, and committed to attaining their desired outcome (Lazarus, 1991).

The hope theory was developed by Snyder et al. in 1991. The theory goes beyond Lazarus's (1991) definition of hope. According to Snyder et al., hope is more than optimism and motivation. It encompasses a reciprocal relationship between one's perceptions of successful goal-directed determination and a sense of successful goal-directed planning. "Hope is similar to optimism in that it is a stable cognitive set reflecting general rather than specific outcome expectancies" (p. 571). Hope is different from optimism in that beyond just expecting good things to happen, those with hope have both strategies and motivations to make things happen or to rather achieve their goals (Snyder et al., 1991).

Hope is defined as a set of beliefs that one's goals can be met and that one has the ability to plan appropriate steps to achieve these goals. High-hope people are those capable of sustaining the motivation necessary to accomplish their goals (Adams et al., in press). Their beliefs and, consequently, their actions are such that they continue to move toward goal attainment. Higher hope as opposed to lower hope individuals are expected to cope better with stressors when encountered. Sustained motivation drives the high hoppers to teach themselves ways of reaching their goals, which also results in high self-esteem. They feel good about themselves and what they have accomplished (Snyder et al., 2000).

While motivation and ability seem enough to meet goals, Schulman (as cited in Adams et al., in press) found that persistence in persevering through adverse situations must be accompanied by positive expectancies. The belief that they are going to accomplish their goals is found in high hoppers (Adams et al., in press). In three separate

studies using National Collegiate Athlete Association (NCAA) Division I athletes, hope scores were found to be predictors of success in both academics and sport achievements. Collegiate athletes were found to have higher hope scores than did typical college students. This was expected because athletes performing at that level of competition have generally experienced years of hopeful thinking in resourcefulness of planning, knowing strategies to deal with competition, and feeling that they would possess the energy to sustain mental attention to their goals. Researchers suggested that such factors may be common to high achievers in other performance settings. Use of the Hope Scale among coaches was seen to play a key role in maintaining well-being of athletes. It could also be helpful in identifying those who need to elevate their hope scores to enhance goal-related thinking (Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997).

Hopeful employees are found to be more resourceful in generating methods of overcoming obstacles to achieving goals (Adams et al., in press). Having alternatives from which to choose in a given situation tends to create the perception of maintaining a sense of control for high-hope individuals. Karasek and Theorell (as cited in Adams et al., in press) found that the degree of perceived control that workers have in their jobs correlates directly to the stress they experience: more control, less stress, and vice versa. Where low-hope employees see obstacles to goal attainment as stressful, high-hope employees tend to view challenges as invigorating as opposed to being overwhelming (Snyder, in press).

Higher as compared to lower hope people are expected to have healthy lifestyles, to avoid life crises, and to cope better with stressors when they are encountered (Snyder et

al., 1991). High hoppers were also found to set loftier goals for themselves than do lower hope people.

Summary

A review of the literature shows that research in cognitive traits related to salesperson success or lack of success has sought unidimensional constructs as the basis for most studies. Motivation, emotions, self-efficacy, problem solving, planning, coping, and goal setting have been examined to determine the role they play in the interchange of cognition and behavior. Physical traits and characteristics have been considered as sales organizations have attempted to identify what will determine a successful salesperson. The work by Snyder et al. (1991) on the hope theory offers an integrated model that considers multifactors in the cognitive orientation of individuals. This theory has received attention in clinical psychotherapy, academia, and various other behavior-modification arenas. To date no studies have sought to explore the relationship of the hope theory and the success of salespersons. This study contributes to the body of knowledge for business, particularly in the areas of sales management, training and development, and organizational behavior.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview

This study was performed to determine whether a relationship exists between Hope Scale scores and salespersons' success as measured by the percentage of sales objectives met. The population of interest was professional salespersons employed by an investment counseling firm and an apparel manufacturing firm. A sample was drawn from both organizations, which yielded 125 respondents. Since the investment representative sample was drawn on a convenience basis, the results are not generalizable to the entire population of interest. Results provide a baseline of which future comparisons may be made. Inferences beyond the sample are useful but purely speculative.

For the protection of human subjects involved in this study, the University of North Texas Institutional Review Board approved the methodology described herein prior to administration of the survey. The remainder of this chapter includes the following sections: population, sample, instrumentation, data collection, and treatment of the data. A summary concludes the chapter.

Population

The population studied was professional salespeople in a financial investment organization and a western apparel manufacturing firm ($N = 4000$). Both organizations are national companies with extensive sales training. Investments in training and development are substantial. The financial investment firm reported to the researcher that

within the 1st year of employment approximately \$50,000 is expended in training each new investment counselor. The western apparel manufacturer reported training investments of approximately \$10,000 per representative annually. A portion of these expenses includes regional and national sales conferences, where new technology is routinely introduced.

Sample

The research sample included full-time salespersons from each company. In the investment firm, sales representatives located in three regions of the south central United States were targeted. The survey instrument was distributed to each sales representative at their June regional sales meetings. Approximately 135 printed surveys were distributed. A total of 104 investment representatives responded to the survey. All of the apparel firm's 75 sales representatives in the United States were contacted by e-mail. The survey instrument was made available to these individuals via Internet. Twenty-one apparel representatives responded to the survey. The total sample was made up of 125 professional salespersons.

Instrumentation

The Hope Scale, or Goals Scale, as it may also be called (Snyder, 2000), was used in the survey instrument. This is a self-reporting device when administered to adults. There were two major sections in the survey. The first section is the Hope Scale. "Permission has been granted to use the survey for research and clinical studies" (p. 77). The second section is for demographic data. Included with the instrument was a cover letter, which assured privacy and confidentiality and acted as a human subjects consent

(see Appendix A).

The Hope Scale was originally a 45-item instrument. Through item analysis, 12 statement items were selected (all $> .20$ coefficients) as representing the constructs of agency and pathways or resourcefulness subset and motivation subset, respectively, as referred to by this researcher. The final version further narrowed the 12 items to 8 hope items that most clearly reflected the resourcefulness component and motivation component (Snyder et al., 1991). Four items are used to measure the resourcefulness subset. Four items measure the motivation subset. Hope is the sum of the two subset scores. These 8 items are scrambled, with 4 additional items that serve as distractors to make up a 12-item instrument (see Appendix A). A 4 point Likert-type scale was used in the original instrument, but was changed to an 8-point scale to allow for more discrimination among respondents. The scale is as follows: 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*).

The demographics section consists of eight items. Three items were related to success that the sales representatives had achieved as a percentage of their goals; two items related to their years as a sales professional; one item related to the number of clients for which they were responsible; and two items related to their compensation plan.

Reliability

In previous studies the Hope Scale has demonstrated itself to be internally consistent (total score Cronbach's alphas ranged from .74 to .84) and to have temporal stability (test-retest correlations were .85, $p < .001$, over a 3-week interval; .73, $p < .001$, over an 8-week interval; and .76 and .82, respectively, $ps < .001$, over 10-week intervals) in two samples (Snyder et al., 1991). Snyder et al. also found positive correlations between the two subset scores, motivation and resourcefulness, of college students in six studies ranging from $r = .38$ to $.46$, $p < .001$.

The Hope Scale has shown strong correlations with numerous cognitive instruments. The following are results of correlates from selected studies that directly relate to areas of interest for this study: the Life Orientation Test (LOT), which measures dispositional optimism and positive outcome expectations, .60 and .50 ($ps < .005$) in two tests; the Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale (GESS), which assesses cross-situational expectancies for attaining goals, .55 and .54 ($ps < .005$); the Burger-Cooper Life Experiences Survey, which measures desire for control, decisiveness, preparation and prevention coping in anticipation of stressors, avoidance of dependence, and leadership, .54 ($p < .005$); the Problem Solving Inventory (PSI), which taps perceived problem-solving ability, $-.62$ ($p < .005$); the Hopelessness Scale, which involves affective feelings about the future and motivations involving decisions to give up, $-.51$ ($p < .005$) (Snyder et al., 1991).

Validity

The Hope Scale has adequate discriminate and convergent validity and good discriminant utility in the predicting of coping styles and overall well-being. Babyak, Snyder, and Yoshinobou (1993) tested the scale to determine whether it did measure two factors as opposed to only one. They determined that the Hope Scale is a higher-order two-factor model. Although the factors are closely related, they are not interchangeable. In particular, no statistical difference existed between men and women as they interpret the two components of goal-directed resourcefulness and motivations for goal attainment.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected through survey instruments distributed in both print and electronic versions. The print version was distributed to the financial investment counselors. The electronic version, or html form, was distributed to the apparel representatives via e-mail invitation. Using traditional and nontraditional forms of survey distribution has been found equally reliable and was not considered a problem. The two survey instruments were similar in appearance. Data collection concerns with self-administered surveys have been found to be similar with printed surveys and electronic mediums (Miller & Dickson, 2001). In particular, the truthfulness of answers, having the individual selected as respondent actually as the one completing the survey, and discussing answers with others prior to completing the survey are three issues of concern with all self-administered surveys. Sample selection is a major issue in electronic surveys (Bowers, 1998). However, the western apparel manufacturer allowed all 75 of its representatives to receive the survey invitation via e-mail.

Snyder (2000) recommended calling the instrument the Goal Scale to avoid biasing the respondents with their interpretation of what hope means to them. A cover letter with consent to proceed explained the need for completing the Goal Scale and assuring confidentiality of the responses (see Appendix B). The printed survey instrument was coded upon receipt to identify the different sales region.

The cover letter and survey instrument were distributed by regional sales managers to investment firm representatives at their Friday afternoon regional sales meetings. Instructions specified that the respondents would complete the survey and seal it in the envelop provided. The regional sales manager collected the envelopes the following morning. The envelopes were then shipped, via express delivery arranged by the researcher, from the meeting site.

The same basic process was followed for representatives of the apparel manufacturer. However, these individuals use the Internet extensively for communications. The cover letter with a hyperlink to an online version of the instrument was distributed via e-mail through a corporate distribution list. The link allowed each representative to complete the survey after reading the consent form. Clicking through the consent signified acceptance on the part of the respondent. As completed questionnaires were received, they were entered into a data base for processing, analysis, and hypotheses testing.

Analysis of Data

The results of the survey were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.0. A level of significance (α) of .05 was used for all tests.

- H₁ There is no statistically significant relationship between the Hope Scale score and salesperson success as measured by the percentage of sales objectives met.
- H₂ There is no statistically significant relationship between the resourcefulness subset score and salesperson success as measured by the percentage of sales objectives met.
- H₃ There is no statistically significant relationship between the motivation subset score and salesperson success as measured by the percentage of sales objectives met.

Testing of the first three hypotheses was achieved through correlation analysis using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient to determine whether relationships exist and the strength of the relationships. Hypotheses resulting in test statistics with $p \leq .05$ were rejected.

- H₄ There is no statistically significant difference between the salespersons' industry and their Hope Scale scores.

H₄ tests the for statistical difference between Hope Scale scores of salespeople from two different industries. Collection of surveys from the two industries allowed the researcher to sort accordingly. In testing this hypothesis, a comparison of Hope Scale mean scores per group was performed using analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine whether statistical differences existed. Rejection of the null hypothesis would result, with $p \leq .05$.

Summary

This study involved testing four hypotheses. The first three were to determine whether relationships of statistical significance exist between the Hope Scale scores and the resourcefulness and motivation subset scores as compared to the success of professional salespersons as measured by the percentage of sales goals achieved. The fourth hypothesis was tested to determine whether there was a difference between Hope Scale scores of the two groups of salespeople: those from a financial investment firm and those from a western apparel manufacturer.

The population of interest included salespersons in a financial investments organization and a western apparel manufacturing firm ($N = 4000$). A sample was drawn using salespersons from the south central United States for the investment firm and the U.S. salesforce for the apparel firm. A total of 125 total respondents participated in the study ($n = 125$).

The survey instrument contained 12 items representing the Hope Scale and 8 demographic items. The Hope Scale has demonstrated internal consistency and temporal stability. It has shown strong correlations with numerous cognitive instruments. It has adequate discriminate and convergent validity and good discriminant utility. The scale has proven to be a two-factor model.

Representatives for the financial investment organization received printed survey instruments, while those in the western apparel firm received electronic versions of the instrument. Data from completed surveys were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.0. Testing of individual hypotheses included the use of

various correlation analyses, ANOVA, and t-tests. A level of significance of .05 was used for all tests. Although the Hope Scale has proven reliable and valid in clinical psychology and academic settings, its use in this study represents one of the first tests in the field of professional selling.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether goal-directed cognition, as measured by Hope Scale scores for salespersons who achieved a greater percentage of their sales goals, was significantly different from the Hope Scale scores of those who were less successful in attaining their sales goals. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section provides an overview of the population of interest. The second section describes the study sample. The third section provides a description of the data and statistical analysis performed. The last section evaluates the hypotheses against the supporting analysis.

Population of Interest

The population of interest for this study was professional salespeople in two companies: a financial investment organization and a western apparel manufacturing firm. Combined sales forces equaled approximately 4,000 people. Members of the population were presumed to share attributes and skills common to most professional sales people. Those included, among other things, well-honed communication skills, extensive industry knowledge as well as client industry knowledge, product knowledge, goal-setting and problem-solving abilities, and time-management abilities. The population of interest would also be exposed to regularly scheduled motivational seminars and selling tactics at sales meetings and conferences.

The Study Sample

Data were collected from 125 professional salespeople from two different organizations. The first group represented a financial investment organization. These representatives comprised 83% (104) of the total surveyed. Three separate sales regions of the firm were selected on a convenience basis, making the results such that they can not be generalized to the entire population of interest. These regions were located in the south central United States. During bi-annual regional sales conferences, 133 printed surveys were distributed; 104 surveys were returned, yielding a 78% response rate. The second group of salespersons were employed by an international western apparel manufacturing firm. The total U. S. sales force of 75 representatives received electronic messages via the Internet requesting participation in an online survey. Twenty-one surveys were returned, yielding a 28% response rate. Total response rate for the study was 60% (see Table 1).

Survey respondents represented a wide cross-section of professional salespeople with regard to their years in the selling profession and years in their respective industries. A majority of the respondents ($n = 74$, 59%) had been in the selling profession for 9 years or less. Most of those individuals ($n = 54$) had been in their respective industries four years or less. Of the 125 participants, 67 (54%) had been in their respective industries for 4 years or less. On the other end of the spectrum, 23 participants (19%) had sales experience of 20 years or more, with almost onehalf (12) having been in their respective industry for 20 or more years. An examination of Table 2 provides the composition of participants with regard to selling experience and years within respective industries.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Participants and Survey Response Rates

Group	<i>n</i>	Percent of total	Survey response rates
Financial representatives	104	83%	104/133 78%
Region 1	40	32%	
Region 2	38	30%	
Region 3	26	21%	
Western apparel representatives	21	17%	21/75 28%
			125/208
Total <i>N</i>	125	100%	60%

Table 2

Number of Respondents by Years as Sales Professional and Years of Sales Experience in Respective Industry

Years in selling profession	Years of sales experience in respective industry						<i>n</i>
	0 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 14	15 to 19	20 to 24	25 or more	
0 to 4	42						42
5 to 9	13	19					32
10 to 14	6	2	6				14
15 to 19	3		3	8			14
20 to 24	1	1		2	2		6
25 or more	2		1	4	2	8	17
Total	67	22	10	14	4	8	125

Instrumentation

The survey instrument contained 12 items representing the Hope Scale and 8 demographic items. Four items are used to measure the Hope Scale resourcefulness subset. Four items measure the motivation subset. Hope is the sum of the two subset scores. These 8 items are scrambled, with 4 additional items that serve as distractors to make up a 12-item instrument (see Appendix A). An 8-point scale Likert-type scale was used to allow for discrimination among respondents. The scale is as follows: 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*).

The pen-and-paper version of the survey was distributed in person to the financial investment representatives. The electronic version was distributed to the apparel representatives through e-mail with a unique hyperlink address.

The Hope Scale has demonstrated internal consistency and temporal stability. It has shown strong correlations with numerous cognitive instruments. In previous studies the Hope Scale has demonstrated itself to be internally consistent with total score Cronbach's alphas ranged from .74 to .84; motivation subset scores Cronbach's alphas ranged from .71 to .76; and resourcefulness subset scores Cronbach's alphas ranged from .63 to .80 (Snyder et al., 1991).

The reliability for this study yielded Cronbach's alpha of .72 for the Hope Scale; the motivation subset yielded Cronbach's alpha of .73; and the resourcefulness subset yielded Cronbach's alpha of .61. The reliability scores of the Hope Scale and the motivation subset score are on the low end of acceptable ranges. Nunnally (as cited in Snyder et al., 1991) notes that scales with internal reliabilities of .70 to .80 are acceptable for research purposes since there is not a problem with measurement error. However, Helmstadter (as cited in Borg, Gall, & Borg, 1996) states reliability scores of .80 or higher are preferred for research purposes. The resourcefulness subset Cronbach's alpha in this study fell below what would be considered even marginally acceptable at .61.

Study Data and Statistical Analysis

The dependent variables in this study were the Hope Scale score and the Hope subset scores of resourcefulness and motivation. Independent variables included the

percentage of the 2001 sales goals attained and the type of industry represented by the respondents.

This study used a self-reporting survey instrument that included the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) and demographic information. Data were coded and database developed with the assistance of Research and Statistical Support at the University of North Texas. The data were analyzed using SPSS 11.0.

All data were initially tested using Levene’s test for equality of variances and independent t-tests for equality of means. No violations of homogeneity were found. The sample size of 125 was found to be appropriate for 95% confidence with statistical power of .7 level for medium effect size (.50) (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 1998). Tables 3 and 4 illustrate the findings of these tests.

Table 3

Levene’s Independent Sample Tests for Equality of Means

		<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Resourcefulness	Equal variance assumed	1.043	.309
	Equal variance not assumed		
Motivation	Equal variance assumed	.047	.830
	Equal variance not assumed		
Hope	Equal variance assumed	1.162	.283
	Equal variance not assumed		

Note. Hope is the sum of resourcefulness and motivation.

Testing of the first three hypotheses was accomplished using Pearson correlation. These hypotheses were testing for statistically significant relationships between Hope

Scale scores and the percentage of 2001 sales goal achieved. The dependent variables were Hope Scale scores and resourcefulness and motivation subset scores, and the independent variable was the percentage of 2001 sales goals attained. The fourth hypothesis was tested using t-tests for independent samples. One-way ANOVA tests were utilized to identify differences between groups. Post hoc tests (Tukey HSD) were used to identify significant relationships between Hope Scale scores and demographic data.

Table 4

Independent Sample t-test for Equality of Means

		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean diff.	Std. Error diff.
Resourcefulness	Equal variance assumed	.953	123	.342	.91	.95
	Equal variance not assumed	1.081	32.990	.287	.91	.84
Motivation	Equal variance assumed	-.832	123.000	.407	-.57	.68
	Equal variance not assumed	-.910	31.523	.370	-.57	.62
Hope	Equal variance assumed	.246	123.000	.806	.34	1.38
	Equal variance not assumed	.277	32.648	.783	.34	1.23

Analysis of Hypotheses

Ho₁ There is no statistically significant relationship between Hope Scale score and salesperson success as measured by the percentage of sales objectives met.

The first hypothesis stated that no relationship would be detected in the Hope Scale scores of successful salespersons and unsuccessful salespersons. Success was measured by the percentage of 2001 sales goals achieved. The statistical test of Pearson correlation indicated that high Hope scores were found to have a positive correlation to high percentage of sales goal achievement with $r = .29$ ($p < .01$) (see Table 3). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Ho₂ There is no statistically significant relationship between the resourcefulness subset score and salesperson success as measured by the percentage of sales objectives met.

The second hypothesis states that no relationship would be detected in the Hope subset scores for resourcefulness for successful salespersons and unsuccessful salespersons. Success was measured by the percentage of 2001 sales goals achieved. The statistical test of Pearson correlation indicated that high Hope scores were not found to have a significant correlation with $r = .179$ (ns $p < .05$) to a high percentage of sales goal achievement. There was no statistically significant relationship. Therefore, the second null hypothesis is not rejected.

Ho₃ There is no statistically significant relationship between the motivation subset score and salesperson success as measured by the percentage of sales objectives met.

The third hypothesis states that no relationship would be detected in the motivation subset score of Hope for successful salespersons and unsuccessful

salespersons. Success was measured by the percentage of 2001 sales goals achieved. The statistical test of Pearson correlation indicated that high motivational subset scores were found to have a positive correlation to a high percentage of sales goal achievement with $r = .352$ ($p < .01$). Therefore, the third null hypothesis is rejected. A summary of the correlations is illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5

Correlations (r) of Hope Scale Scores, Resourcefulness Subset Scores, Motivation Subset Scores, and 2001 Sales Goal Achieved

	Hope	Resourcefulness	Motivation	2001 sales goal achieved
Hope	1.00	.893*	.776*	.293*
Resourcefulness		1.00	.408*	.179
Motivation			1.00	3.53*

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Ho₄ There is no statistically significant difference between the salesperson's industry and Hope Scale score.

The fourth null hypothesis states that there was no statistically significant difference between mean group Hope Scale scores of those within the financial investment firm and the western apparel firm. Using t-tests for independent samples, no significant difference could be found between the two groups; therefore the fourth null hypothesis is not rejected. Table 6 illustrates the group statistics for the mean scores.

Table 6

Summary of Sales Groups by Dependent Variable Group Mean Score Statistics

Dependent variable category by sales group	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error mean
Resourcefulness				
Financial representatives	104	26.14	4.08	.40
Apparel representatives	21	25.24	3.37	.74
Motivation				
Financial representatives	104	27.58	2.90	.28
Apparel representatives	21	28.14	2.54	.55
Hope				
Financial representatives	104	53.72	5.92	.58
Apparel representatives	21	53.38	4.95	1.08

In chapter 5 the results of this study are discussed; conclusions regarding the impact and effects of using the Hope Scale as a sales force evaluation tool are offered; and recommendations for further studies are presented.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the study and discusses the findings with regard to previous research utilizing the Hope Scale. Also discussed are the conclusions for implications of using the Hope Scale as an evaluation tool in sales management for training and development. Finally, recommendations for future research are presented.

Discussion

This study sought to determine whether a relationship existed between an individual salesperson's levels of goal-directed cognition and motivation as measured by the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) with professional success determined by the percentage of sales goals achieved. Assessing salesperson goal achievement with the Hope Scale was introduced for the first time in this study.

The sample consisted of salespersons representing either one of two companies with national sales forces: financial investment representatives and western apparel manufacturing representatives. Data were collected from 125 sales representatives via surveys during the months of June and July 2002. The financial representatives worked in three regions in the south central United States. They completed printed surveys at their respective biannual regional sales meetings. It should be noted that the three regions selected to participate in the study were done so on a convenience basis. As the researcher considered data collected from the three groups, no differences were found in the regions represented. Because of the hiring and training practices of the financial investment

organization, no differences are believed, by the researcher, to exist across the organization. The western apparel representatives were from that company's national sales force and completed surveys online via the Internet.

Data analysis regarding the composition of the sample of salespersons revealed no differences among groups. Mean Hope Scale scores and standard deviations were tightly grouped. These facts are believed to explain a restriction of range contributing to the motivation and the resourcefulness subset scores correlating significantly with Hope scores (see Table 5). The researcher accepts this finding as an inherent issue of testing a homogeneous group. A more discriminating independent variable than percentage of sales goals achieved was needed to effectively delineate the subset scores.

The survey instrument included the Hope Scale developed by Snyder (1992) and demographic questions developed by the researcher (see Appendix A). Printed and online surveys were the same, with the exception of minor formatting differences due to the different mediums used. A 60% overall response rate was achieved for this study. The investment representatives returned printed surveys at rate of 78% to the western apparel representatives rate of 28%. The personal touch of having the regional sales managers distribute and collect the surveys was a major factor in the response rate. Although participation was strictly voluntary and anonymous, having their manager involved in the process appeared to have been a major motivating factor in returning completed surveys. This technique was extremely effective. Using the self-seal return envelope, whether the survey was completed or not, was necessary to assure the salesperson anonymity and to avoid any adverse actions for noncompliance. The researcher would use this technique

again. The statistical software SPSS 11.0 was used to conduct all appropriate statistical tests.

Ho₁ There is no statistically significant relationship between Hope Scale score and salesperson success as measured by the percentage of sales objectives met.

Correlation analysis indicated a statistically significant positive relationship ($r = .29, p < .01$ level) between salesperson Hope scores and the percentage of 2001 sales goal achieved. This finding supports convergent validity studies that relate to the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). The correlation of $r = .293$ is at the minimum range (.30 to .50) for low positive correlation (Hinkle et al., 1998). The coefficient of determination is $r^2 = .09$. This would mean that 9% of the variance in achieving the 2001 sales goals could be attributed to the variance in the Hope score.

This correlation adds to the body of knowledge on work with goal-directed thinking and actual behavior (Badovick, 1990; Barrick & Mount, 1991; Brown et al., 1998; Lazarus, 1991; Snyder et al., 1991; Sujjan, 1980). Although the hope theory supports high Hope scores and high achievement, little research has actually been done to substantiate the claim. In a study of psychology students by Anderson (as cited in Snyder et al., 2001) there was no difference in goal attainment of low-hope and high-hope students, which would have failed to reject a null hypothesis. However, the levels of goals set were lower for low-hope people and higher for high-hope people. Literature on cognitive sets and personality traits is also lacking with regard to relevance of salesperson's behavior as compared to organizational goals (Morris et al., 1994). This study represented a small sample of salespersons (125). The value of these findings will

be better understood with continued research. However, the significance of the .09 coefficient of determination is relevant. A change in sales goal success, as defined as a percentage of sales goals achieved, could be attributed to a change in Hope scores. Sales managers could possibly use the Hope Scale score to identify opportunities to increase sales success. Training salespersons to engage in more specific goal-directed thinking and planning may allow those individuals to experience greater levels of selling success.

Ho₂ There is no statistically significant relationship between the resourcefulness subset score and salesperson success as measured by the percentage of sales objectives met.

The correlation analysis of the resourcefulness subset factor was not found to be statistically significant with $r = .179$ (ns $p < .05$). These findings run contrary to the literature. High-hope thinking has been found to correlate positively with high coping processes and goal-directed thinking (Snyder et al., 1999). An explanation of these findings is believed, by the researcher, to be directly related to the low reliability Cronbach's alpha coefficient (.61) yielded for the resourcefulness subset score.

Theoretically, resourcefulness and motivation subset scores should have yielded similar correlations with the overall Hope scores but not necessarily with one another. Knowing the volatility of the financial markets over the 10 to 12 months prior to this study, one might conclude that the large percentage of financial representatives (83%) making up the sample may have skewed the results. However, no statistical differences were found in comparisons of group mean scores for the two industries. This leads the researcher to

conclude that the restriction of range, as mentioned earlier, may have contributed to the results.

Consideration must be given to the four items identifying the resourcefulness construct. Do these items adequately describe and define the construct of resourcefulness in the complex setting of professional sales? Moreover, with the narrow definition of sales success used in this study, is it appropriate to expect significant correlations with the resourcefulness scores? Failure to reject the null in this instance raises more questions than are answered. It could be that strategies selected by salespeople for goal accomplishment were considered appropriate and that issues out of the control of the salesperson were not factors of relevance to them regarding future expectancies (Sujan, 1986). According to Sujan, if these individuals are more inclined to be intrinsically oriented, continued pursuit of the strategies previously resulting in success will occur again when external factors are favorable. The level of sales training for these individuals is extremely high. They are rewarded for their successes on a compensation plan. The years of selling experience among the respondents lead the researcher to believe that there is a great deal of confidence in the strategies being used. More research is needed to determine the significance of these findings as correlates to the relationship of cognition and behavior.

Ho₃ There is no statistically significant relationship between the motivation subset score and salesperson success as measured by the percentage of sales objectives met.

Correlation analysis indicated a statistically significant positive relationship ($r =$

.35, $p < .01$ level) between salesperson motivation subset scores and the percentage of 2001 sales goals achieved. These findings support convergent validity studies that relate to the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). The correlation of $r = .35$ is in range (.30 to .50) for low positive correlation (Hinkle et al., 1998). The coefficient of determination is $r^2 = .12$. This would mean that 12% of the variance in achieving the 2001 sales goals could be associated with the variance in motivation subset score. This correlation ($r = .352$) is greater than that found for the overall Hope Scale score and 2001 sales goal correlation ($r = .293$). It can be explained by the lack of correlation with the resourcefulness subset score and achieving the 2001 sales goal (ns $r = .179$). Hope scores are the sum of the two subset factors. The hope model has been found to be a two-factor, multidimensional construct and is supported by psychometric evidence (Babyak et al., 1993). As can be noted in Table 5, the subset factors of resourcefulness and motivation correlate with each other, but are not replicating the same constructs, as evidenced by the r values (Babyak et al., 1993).

Motivation has long been considered an integral part of successful selling (Badovick, 1990; Lazarus, 1991; Snyder, 1994; Sujana, 1986). These findings could be considered a sizable portion of the 2001 sales goal variance and worthy of further investigation. The results found by Churchill et al. (1985) in the meta-analysis of 116 articles written over the previous 75 years showed disappointingly small relationships between single predictors of performance and salesperson actual performance. The results found here demonstrate a correlation stronger than the weighted means of skill levels, aptitude, motivation, role, personal factors, and organizational and environmental factors

as single factor indicators of salesperson's performance (Churchill et al., 1985).

Multideterminant model frameworks such as the hope theory were considered to produce better correlations to actual behavior. Why then would this portion of the model outperform the two-factor model? This question will not be answered until more is known about the resourcefulness portion as it relates to professional salespeople.

However, based upon these findings, salespersons scoring low on the motivational subset score should be targeted for further analysis, training, and development. According to the results of this study, increasing their motivational scores should result in an increase in sales success.

Ho₄ There is no statistically significant difference between the salespersons' industry and their Hope Scale score.

Comparisons of group mean scores between the financial investment representatives and the western apparel representatives revealed no statistical differences. Hope scores among the study participants were similar. These findings are supportive of background information gathered by the researcher. Both organizations placed high priorities on training and development of their sales force. Sales professionals in both organizations received training in personal communication, personal selling, and time management. Also, extensive product and industry knowledge was required of the salespeople. These results attest to the fact that researchers continue to seek answers to the question of what type of person will perform well in sales. One can see from testing this hypothesis that there was no difference found in the two groups. Additional studies of sales force comparisons between different industries are needed to prove information that

supports being able to treat all professional salespersons similarly.

Conclusions

This study provided mixed results of hypotheses testing for the relationship of Hope scores and subset scores to the percentage of 2001 sales goals achieved by professional salespersons. Of particular note is that this study provides evidence that high Hope scores correlated positively with high percentages of sales goals achieved. Among those sampled, the coefficient of determination explained that 9% of the variance in achieving the 2001 sales goals could be associated with the variance in Hope Scale score. Could these finding be the missing link in explaining the difference between excellence and mediocrity in sales success? More information is needed. However, these findings will be important as a baseline for future comparisons, and will add to the body of knowledge being developed on the use of the hope theory.

The correlation between the motivation subset score and the percentage of 2001 sales goals achieved among those surveyed is worthy of noting. These findings proved to have a significant correlation of .352. The importance of people being able to sustain energy and drive to accomplish goals is appreciated across disciplines. This one study of 125 salespersons is not enough to measure the impact of such information. More research is needed to better understand the contribution this could make to sales management.

The Hope score has been found to be a multidimensional construct by confirmatory analysis and other psychometric testing (Babyak et al., 1993). The two subscores of resourcefulness and motivation are added to achieve the Hope score.

Reliability testing of data for this study showed the subscores to be independent of one another. No work existed, prior to this study, on attempting to correlate past performance in sales (goal achievement) with Hope scores. However, unlike prior studies using the hope theory, findings in this study did not follow preexisting patterns with resourcefulness scores and motivation scores tracking similarly on measures of significance.

The researcher feels that relevance of these findings to the field of professional selling is relevant, but should be used with caution as the work in the field of selling is new. The resourcefulness subscore offered questionable results due to both the low reliability coefficient and the lack of significant correlation with the percentage of sales goals achieved. More research will be needed to determine whether this is an aberration, a poor comparison of cognitive-goal directed thinking and behavior, or whether this is an area where the theory does not apply.

Finally, it is worth noting that comparisons of samples of sales forces from two distinctly different industries measured similarly on Hope scales and general demographic questions. This is important for future research purposes in examining similar populations of interest. It is also important because two different mediums were used for gathering the data: paper and pencil survey instruments and surveys on the World Wide Web.

Recommendations

Several issues regarding the use of the hope theory and the Hope Scale as an assessment tool in sales training and development should be explored through additional research. Included here are recommendations for changes in the study should this be

replicated in the future. The following items are topics for future study:

1. Much of the previous work with the hope theory deals with predicting future outcomes. Exploring areas of sales force development that could test predicting outcomes would allow for more comparisons to preexisting data using the hope theory.
2. Collection of demographic data was limited in this study by categories established by the researcher for percentage of sales goals achieved, years in the selling profession, and years selling in the industry. Respondents should be allowed to fill in the number of years as appropriate to allow for the collection of continuous data.
3. Comparisons of Hope Scale scores should be made with other assessment instruments for salespersons.
4. This study limited salesperson success to the percentage of 2001 sales goals achieved. Future researchers may want to develop a more comprehensive, multifaceted measurement of success that would include other factors of value to the sales organization.
5. Reliability of the resourcefulness subset was found to be at an unacceptable level. More work is needed to improve reliability of this portion of the Hope Scale as it relates to professional salespeople.

APPENDIX A
HOPE SCALE INSTRUMENT
(THE GOALS SURVEY)

The Goals Scale

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

1 = Definitely False, 2 = Mostly False, 3 = Somewhat False, 4 = Slightly False,
5 = Slightly True, 6 = Somewhat True, 7 = Mostly True, 8 = Definitely True.

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

General information about YOU:

13. Please check the appropriate percentage range to indicate the level of **2001** sales goal you attained.

- | | | | |
|---------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| _____ less than 10% | (1) | _____ 70% - 84% | (6) |
| _____ 10% - 24% | (2) | _____ 85% - 99% | (7) |
| _____ 25% - 39% | (3) | _____ 100% - 110% | (8) |
| _____ 40% - 54% | (4) | _____ over 110% | (9) |
| _____ 55% - 69% | (5) | _____ Not applicable | (0) |

14. Please indicate the percentage of your **first quarter or tri-mester 2002** sales goal you have attained.

- | | | | |
|---------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| _____ less than 10% | (1) | _____ 70% - 84% | (6) |
| _____ 10% - 24% | (2) | _____ 85% - 99% | (7) |
| _____ 25% - 39% | (3) | _____ 100% - 110% | (8) |
| _____ 40% - 54% | (4) | _____ over 110% | (9) |
| _____ 55% - 69% | (5) | _____ Not applicable | (0) |

15. Under the present circumstances in your area/territory, please indicate what percentage of your sales goal you expect to attain for the year **2002**.
- | | | | |
|--|-----|--------------------------------------|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> less than 10% | (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> 70% - 84% | (6) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10% - 24% | (2) | <input type="checkbox"/> 85% - 99% | (7) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25% - 39% | (3) | <input type="checkbox"/> 100% - 110% | (8) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 40% - 54% | (4) | <input type="checkbox"/> over 110% | (9) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 55% - 69% | (5) | | |
16. What type of compensation plan are you currently under? (Please check)
- | | | | |
|--|-----|--|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Straight Commission | (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> Salary + Commission | (4) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commission + Expenses | (2) | <input type="checkbox"/> Salary + Bonus | (5) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commission + Bonus | (3) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please list) _____ | (6) |
17. Are you satisfied with the compensation plan you are presently under?
- | | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | (1) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | (2) |
18. How many years of sales experience do you have in your present industry?(Please check)
- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 4 | (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> 15 - 19 | (4) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5 - 9 | (2) | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 - 14 | (5) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10-14 | (3) | <input type="checkbox"/> 25 or more | (6) |
19. How many years have you been in the selling profession? (Please check)
- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 4 | (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> 15 - 19 | (4) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5 - 9 | (2) | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 - 14 | (5) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10-14 | (3) | <input type="checkbox"/> 25 or more | (6) |
20. How many client accounts are you personally responsible for? (Please check)
- | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 - 24 | (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> 75 - 99 | (4) | <input type="checkbox"/> 150 or more | (7) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25 - 49 | (2) | <input type="checkbox"/> 100 - 124 | (5) | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 50 - 74 | (3) | <input type="checkbox"/> 125 - 149 | (6) | | |

Thank you for your help.

APPENDIX B
COVER LETTER NUMBER 1
INVESTMENT SALES REPRESENTATIVES

(Date)

Dear (Title Used):

Your participation is needed in a study being conducted with (Company Name) to better understand how individuals such as yourself, involved in professional selling, handle goals and goal setting. Your responses will be added to those of other professionals in (Company Name), and analyzed as a group. The survey is brief and should take you less than five minutes to complete.

Please complete the survey, place it in the envelope, and seal it. To maintain confidentiality, **do not write your name on the survey or the envelope**. Participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, please, place the survey back in the envelope, and seal it. **Envelopes will be collected Saturday morning**. Look for the survey box at your first session. All of your responses will be anonymous as no reference to individuals will be possible.

If you have any questions regarding the survey or the study, please feel free to contact me by phone (903) 463-1425 or e-mail ppool@sosu.edu. Faculty sponsor for this project is Dr. Jeff Allen (940/565-4918). This project has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (940/565-3940). Thank you for your participation!

Best regards,

Patricia W. Pool
Assistant Professor of Marketing
Southeastern Oklahoma State University
Durant, Oklahoma
Ph. D. Candidate
University of North Texas
Denton, Texas

Enclosure

APPENDIX C
COVER LETTER NUMBER 2
ELECTRONIC VERSION

Dear (Title Used):

Your participation is needed in a study being conducted with (Company Name) to better understand how individuals such as yourself, involved in professional selling, handle goals and goal setting. Your responses will be added to those of other professionals in (Company Name) , and analyzed as a group. The survey is brief and should take you less than five minutes to complete.

You can complete the survey on-line by clicking on this web address <http://www.EXAMPLEgotogoals>. Please use the Contact Name of (Company Name) and Password of GOALS. All responses will be anonymous as no reference to individuals will be possible. Please participate only once. Participation in this study is voluntary. If you prefer, you may print the survey, complete it, and mail it to me at Southeastern Oklahoma State University, P.O. Box 4214, Durant, OK, 74701. To maintain confidentiality, please, **do not put your name on the survey or the envelope**.

If you have any questions regarding the survey or the study, please feel free to contact me by phone (903) 463-1425 or e-mail ppool@sosu.edu. Faculty advisor for this project is Dr. Jeff Allen (940/565-4918). This project has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (940/565-3940).

Thank you for your participation!

Best regards,

Patricia W. Pool
Assistant Professor of Marketing
Southeastern Oklahoma State University
Ph. D. Candidate
University of North Texas

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