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Hope for a Good Life

Results of the Hope-Barometer International
Research Program

 Springer

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Introduction

In 2009, when the idea of launching the Hope-Barometer as a broad public survey on hope and other positive attributes and experiences was born, the research project was started as a “private” initiative among friends and colleagues around swissfuture, the Swiss Society for Futures Studies, a member of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAGW). The basic motivation for initiating such a venture was the impression, that in Europe, especially in Germany and Switzerland, the attention of people and particularly of mass media has been much more focused on problems, risks, catastrophes, worries, and fears regarding the future than on opportunities and potentials. In order to empirically investigate the fundamental aspects, conditions, and interrelations of a positive attitude toward the future, and to be able to discuss the results in the public media, a multidisciplinary group was established. Members included representatives from different scientific fields such as future studies, sociology of religion, theology, psychotherapy, history, economy, management, and media. Based on the results of a broad literature review we came to the conclusion, that in contrast to the USA, hope was under-researched in German-speaking Europe.

Based on the first experiences and insights of the Hope-Barometer in 2009 and 2010, a summarizing report in the swissfuture magazine (2010/Issue 1) was published. During the following years, research collaboration with the University of St. Gallen and several other universities was established. Furthermore, contact with print and e-media in Switzerland, Germany, and successively also in other countries was extended. Since 2011, the annual results of the Hope-Barometer were regularly presented in the form of talks, symposia, and roundtables at the international congresses of the International Positive Psychology Association (IPPA) and the European Conference of Positive Psychology (ECP). The interest in the Hope-Barometer among researchers from different countries has led to the establishment of an international research network. Consequently, the Hope-Barometer survey now takes place every year not only in Switzerland and Germany but also in France, the Czech Republic, Poland, Spain, India, Malta, Israel, and South Africa.

Particularly gratifying is the positive echo the Hope-Barometer has achieved in the mass media. Various newspapers offer their internet pages every year to promote

the survey and to publish the link to the questionnaire in order to reach a large number of interested public. Consequently, thousands of people have been able to participate in the survey every year and by doing so, to reflect upon their own hopes for the future. Moreover, these and other newspapers and magazines have dedicated a prominent space to the results of the survey, both in their online and print issues. Thanks to the support of the Swiss Positive Psychology Association (SWIPPA) and the tight collaboration between *swissfuture* and the Institute of Psychology of the University of Bern (Switzerland), the first Swiss Conference on Hope was organized in 2015, with representatives of the international network of the Hope-Barometer, and the participation of other researchers, students, the media, and the general public.

This book presents selected results of the Hope-Barometer, focusing on the relationship of hope and the quest for a good life in several countries with different cultural backgrounds. The book is structured in three parts. In Part I, Krafft and Walker first provide an overview of the many psychological theories and conceptualizations of hope and introduce the reader to the methodological foundations of the Hope-Barometer (Chap. 1). Then, in Chap. 2, the authors present a review of research findings of the Hope-Barometer, based on research conducted in the last seven years in Germany and German-speaking Switzerland. The basic conclusion is that eudaimonic domains of well-being lead to cultivating a virtuous circle of hope, in which the principal sources of hope are at the same time the most-valued targets of hope, mutually reinforcing each other.

In the second part of the book, selected empirical contributions related to the levels and variations of hope across different population groups, and the relationship of hope with several measures of well-being, are presented.

In Chap. 3, Guse and Shaw study the relationship between dispositional and perceived hope, meaning in life and well-being in a sample of South African young adults. Their results indicate that meaning in life mediates the relationship between both dispositional and perceived hope and well-being, concluding that the quality of the relationship may be different in each case.

In Chap. 4, Perrig-Chiello et al. adopt a lifespan and gender perspective, analyzing to which extent dispositional hope, well-being, and age/gender are related among the Swiss-German population. They conclude that all well-being and dispositional hope (agency and pathways) parameters increase with age and highlight the particular role of agency, defined as will-power, for predicting life satisfaction and meaning in life over all age groups, especially for women. Furthermore, they discuss the special effect of optimism (stronger than dispositional hope) with regard to higher levels of happiness.

The impact of marital status on well-being and dispositional hope is the focus of Chap. 5. Spahni and Perrig-Chiello compare married, separated/divorced, and widowed individuals in German-speaking Switzerland and examine how subjective well-being and health are affected by the marital status and to what extent dispositional hope, optimism, and social resources can explain these outcomes. They come to the conclusion that, in different ways, dispositional hope and optimism are crucial

personal characteristics associated with better well-being after facing separation, divorce, or death.

Although religiosity and spirituality are often considered to be important dimensions of hope in existing literature, research findings in Europe have shown rather low correlations between these constructs and hope. The objective of Chap. 6 is to explore the importance of religiosity and spirituality among different demographic groups (age, gender, etc.) of the Swiss population and their association with subjective well-being. Margelisch comes to the conclusion that religiosity and spirituality, both in general and particularly in terms of activities to promote hope, can play an important role in the context of critical life events and the adaptation to profound life transitions.

Part III includes three contributions on the comparison of elements and levels of hope across cultures.

In Chap. 7, Krafft and Choubisa outline the main ontological and epistemological propositions of Indian Psychology, its conceptualizations of the self and of a good and fulfilling life. They furthermore explore the notion of hope within the Eastern philosophical and spiritual tradition in contrast to the cognitive Western approach. The chapter concludes with empirical findings comparing a group of young adults in India to a similar sample in German-speaking Europe.

Slezáčková et al. compare two Czech and Maltese samples in Chap. 8. They explore the correlates and predictors of perceived hope among the two groups in terms of optimism, life satisfaction, positive relations, loneliness, generativity, and spirituality. Besides finding cultural differences with regard to demographic factors such as gender, age, family status, education level, religious beliefs, and engagement in voluntary activities, and the strong role of dispositional optimism in relation to hope, the researchers identified two different variables, which measure a facet of transcendence, as major predictors of perceived hope. Specifically, generativity predicted perceived hope in the Czech sample and spirituality in the Maltese group.

In Chap. 9, Flores-Lucas et al. introduce the concept of psychological capital, as well as its role and usefulness in relation to academic success. They furthermore analyze the relationship between hope, psychological capital, and other relevant variables that impact educational and future life success, comparing three samples of Spanish, German, and Indian students. The chapter attempts to highlight the effect of positive resources not only to improve the academic success in students but also to prepare them for successful integration in their future career.

The success of the Hope-Barometer and the publication of this book was only possible thanks to the commitment and the support of many people. The first working group led by Andreas M. Walker was composed by (in alphabetical order) Markus Baumgartner, Markus Merz, Francis Müller, Stephan Nüesch, Stefan Schwarz, and Stefan Siegrist. The international network led by Andreas M. Krafft includes (in alphabetical order) Carmel Cefai, Rajneesh Choubisa, Fabien Fenouillet, Liora Findler, María del Valle Flores-Lucas, Tharina Guse, Pawel Izdebski, Elzbieta Kasprzak, Charles Martin-Krumm, and Alena Slezáčková, some of them being authors of chapters in this book. We want to direct special acknowledgement and

personal recognition and appreciation, to Shane Lopez, a pioneer in the field of hope research. The many talks with him were always very inspiring and finally triggered the formation of this international research network on hope. For their valuable collaboration, we also want to acknowledge the team led by Pasqualina Perrig-Chiello, namely Stefanie Spahni and Katja Margelisch, who also contributed to this book. Furthermore, we are especially grateful to Leo Bormans for his motivating and inspiring work to promote happiness and hope. For their long-standing support and their trust and encouragement, we want to express our gratefulness to Thomas Winkler, Fritz Peyer-Müller, and the Foundation for Education and Research. Likewise, we thank the support of swissfuture as well as of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences.

With the Hope-Barometer, we want to make a scientific contribution with a positive value for society, so that more and more people could be encouraged to adopt a positive view on the future, to believe in their own strengths and the goodness of the world, and by doing so, to attain their own dreams of a happy and fulfilling life.

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