

Social Indicators Research Series 72

Andreas M. Krafft
Pasqualina Perrig-Chiello
Andreas M. Walker *Editors*

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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Part I
Theoretical Foundations and General
Empirical Findings

Chapter 1

Exploring the Concept and Experience of Hope – Theoretical and Methodological Foundations



Andreas M. Krafft and Andreas M. Walker

Introduction and Purpose

Hope is a basic human phenomenon that has been the focus of inquiry of many different disciplines throughout history such as philosophy, theology, ethics, sociology and psychology (Krafft & Walker, 2018; Scioli & Biller, 2009). Although almost all related disciplines and scientific communities understand hope as a positive expectation towards a better future, many fundamental differences became evident in the meaning, roots and overall understanding of what hope is, where it comes from and which elements it contains. Reverting to distinct traditions and philosophies of hope, researchers in psychology and nursing research have conceptualized this term in different ways (see Elliott, 2005). Current concepts of hope differ fundamentally with regard to core aspects and elements contained in its definition (Slezáčková, 2017). Differences in the conceptualization of hope are not only rooted in the diverse disciplinary traditions, but also in the diversity of cultural, political, religious, economic and social backgrounds and beliefs not only of ordinary people but also of scientists and researchers (Averill & Sundararajan, 2005).

In the psychological context there are various perspectives regarding the conceptualization of hope and what it delimits this phenomenon from other constructs such as optimism and self-efficacy. Basically, hope has been the object of research within a cognitive-behavioral framework of goal-related theories (Snyder, 1994, 2002; Stotland, 1969) as well as embedded in broader theories of basic human emotions (Averill, Catlin, & Chon, 1990; Fredrickson, 1998, 2004; Scioli et al., 1997). Furthermore, hope has been seen as something merely individual or something that

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is fundamentally related to others, be it other people or even a universal and transcendent higher power (Erikson, 1963; Godfrey, 1987; Marcel, 1951). Some theories highlight personal control and mastery over the outcomes hoped-for, while others emphasize exactly the opposite, namely the perception of helplessness when hoping for something out of our direct control (Pruyser, 1986). Main differences can also be found regarding the objects hoped-for, the sources of hope and the actions performed for its realization (Averill et al., 1990; Averill & Sundararajan, 2005). In recent years, discussions regarding the nature of hope have increased as well as the attempts to integrate more complex and multidimensional theories and measures into the many different facets the experience of hoping seems to entail.

Despite the increasing amount of international research and publications on hope, mass media and institutions in Europe, at least in the German speaking countries, have been more interested in the negative side of life, i.e. in the worries, fears and anxieties of the population. For example, for the past 30 years, two leading Swiss financial institutions have been conducting an annual Worry- and Fear-Barometer survey, asking the Swiss population about their greatest concerns (e.g. unemployment, retirement provision, healthcare, personal security, etc.) and how much (or how little) trust they have in those responsible for making political, business and social decisions. Against this background, *swissfuture*, the Swiss Association for Future Studies,¹ in cooperation with the University of St. Gallen started an annual survey on hope and several other positive attributes in 2009. The aim was to develop a new Hope-Barometer with the objective to explore the meaning, the sources, the targets and levels of hope among the population, not only for academic purposes but also for spreading hope throughout society (Walker & Müller, 2010).

Using data collected in the context of the Hope-Barometer in different countries, the purpose of this book is to present international results, especially the assessment of the concrete levels and cultural aspects of hope in relation to different dimensions of well-being. Accordingly, the book has three central aims that build successively on each other: (1) A discussion and evaluation of different conceptualizations of hope; (2) The presentation of new instruments to measure different aspects and elements of hope and (3) The presentation of results from different countries and the evaluation of specific cultural peculiarities.

Different Conceptualizations of Hope

Hope philosophers and nowadays the discipline of positive psychology have seen hope as an inner driving force towards a better life and world. Many authors refer to the work of Aristotle (1962) who defined a good life as a life lived in congruence with the human virtues and personal strengths, which he called *Eudaimonia*, i.e. happiness in accordance with one's good spirit. However, Aristotle did not consider

¹A member of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences.

hope a human virtue. In Christian theology, hope is considered a divine virtue, with God as the first source and the final target of hope. According to Christian theologians and philosophers, Christian hope can be considered to be an absolute or fundamental hope, because it is based on the certainty the believer has regarding God's love and omnipotence (Godfrey, 1987; Marcel, 1951). For Kant the highest good is defined as the degree of happiness in accordance with our worthiness for it, based on our moral behavior, independently from any religious value system. His hopes are directed to this highest good not only for the individual but also in terms of an ethical commonwealth, which, however, only can be achieved thanks to the assistance and support of a benevolent God (Michalson, 1999). Moltmann (1968) is the German theologian for whom hope is the theological virtue that brings men closer to the kingdom of God already here on earth, and Bloch (1959) the secular philosopher who saw hope as the human capacity to anticipate a better life and world for oneself and for all human beings. For the existentialist philosopher Marcel (1951) hope is a creative and transcendent mysterious spiritual force that emerges in the intersubjective encounter between two human beings connected in love.

After centuries of philosophical and theological conceptualizations of hope, new psychological theories started to understand hope as a cognitive-behavioral phenomenon, defining it as “an expectation greater than zero of achieving a goal” (Stotland, 1969, p. 2) or the belief that a favorable outcome is likely to occur (Gottschalk, 1974). The main variables to assess if a person is hopeful or not became the level of perceived probability in the attainment of specific personal goals and the importance the person attributes to these goals, linked to the basic belief that the fulfilment of hopes is basically an effect of the person's own capabilities, actions and efforts. Currently, the most diffused cognitive theory of hope is that of Snyder (1994, 2000, 2002) and his colleagues (Lopez, Snyder, & Pedrotti, 2003), who characterize hope as individual mental will- and way-power towards the fulfilment of personal goals. Dispositional hope, as Snyder (2002) defined it, is a trait-like cognitive mindset involving two basic components: (1) Agency as the basic perception of one's determination and motivation to initiate and sustain actions (will-power) to reach defined personal goals and (2) Pathways, the belief in one's own capabilities to generate alternative routes in case of facing obstacles and setbacks (way-power).

Snyder's theory of hope has a self-centered character in that it refers to the person's perception in relation to his or her own efficacy to attain personal goals (Snyder et al., 1991). Key attributes of hopeful people are their tenacity and their active thinking and behaving towards ambitious personal goals. As he formulated it: “Hope is the essential process of linking oneself to potential success” (Snyder, 1994, p. 18). Very hopeful people perceive themselves in control of their lives and having a sense of self-direction. Hope is related to perceptions of personal mastery, the ability to solve problems and a higher level of self-esteem. Hopeful people are ambitious because they tend to have a greater number and more difficult goals than average people. The emphasis in Snyder's hope theory is on success, performance, achievement, resilience and coping (Snyder et al., 1991). The process of hoping is seen as a universal phenomenon largely neutral about the value of the goals and the

probability of their attainment (Snyder, 2002). Thoughts and actions have predominance over feelings, and emotions are seen as an effect of successful or frustrated goal attainment. Relationships to other people are important, however primarily in the sense of supporting hopeful thinking and in taking into consideration the goals and perspectives of others to pursue one's own goals (Snyder, 2000).

A common criticism of Snyder's theory of hope is that it is conceptually similar to other psychological constructs (Bruininks & Malle, 2005; Rand & Cheavens, 2009; Tennen, Affleck, & Tennen, 2002; Tong, Fredrickson, Chang, & Lim, 2010). Snyder himself has noted the conceptual overlap between his theory of hope and other goal-oriented constructs such as optimism and self-efficacy (Snyder 2000, 2002). However, in his eyes, optimism (as defined by Scheier & Carver, 1987) and self-efficacy (Bandura 1977) are different from his definition of hope, since these constructs consider only one of the two relevant dimensions: Agency in the case of optimism (Snyder, Sympson, Michael, & Cheavens, 2001) and Pathways in the case of self-efficacy. There is a huge difference, he argues, between the "can" (capacity) in the case of self-efficacy and the "will" (intention) in the concept of agentic hope.

Alternative theories of hope want to overcome the limitations of the cognitive concept and intend to represent the complexity of the phenomenon by integrating different research findings and traditional philosophical reflections. The main differences in alternative theories of hope vis-à-vis the cognitive-behavioral paradigm can be found in the fundamental nature of hope as an emotion, in the degree of control the hopeful person has over the hoped-for outcome, in the interpersonal character of hope as well as in the intrinsic moral value of hope compared to other constructs such as optimism and wishing. Many authors relate to the work of Erikson (1963) who, within the framework of his developmental theory, recognized hope as the first and fundamental human virtue necessary for man's psychosocial development. The emergence and reinforcement of hope is grounded in the basic trust an individual has in people in his immediate social environment. For Erikson, hope, as a virtue, is not only the basis for effective action but also for ethical human behavior. Instead of being cognitive and rational, hope does not always depend on evidence or reason but is fundamentally based on trust (Elliott, 2005; Godfrey, 1987; Tennen et al., 2002).

This focus on trust and interpersonal relations is especially crucial when the individual does not seem to have enough possibilities to influence the event or situation he or she is hoping for. Inspired by the work of Marcel (1951) hope is categorically distinguished from optimism and expectation by its fundamental existential character (Pruyser, 1986). Hope comes into play when the person is confronted with a threatening or dreadful situation and does not feel capable of coping with it by means of his or her own resources alone. For these authors, hope deals with critical experiences in life and has a transformative character for the person involved. The central question related to hope is, how people make sense of and respond to these critical situations (Elliott, 2005). As in the work of Frankl (1959), hope presupposes the transcendence of one's own ego, a feeling of communion with other people and the belief in a benevolent higher power (Pruyser, 1986). For this reason, Peterson and Seligman (2004) included hope in their catalogue of character strengths

common across cultures as belonging to the virtue of transcendence. For them, hope belongs to the virtue of transcendence because it goes beyond one's own knowledge and coping capabilities and allows us to build connections to something bigger than ourselves that provides us with meaning, purpose and basic beliefs. In their categorization, hope is linked to other character strengths such as gratitude, appreciation of beauty and excellence, humor and especially spirituality and religious faith. As a transcendent character strength, hope is linked to values which provide a moral framework that keeps the person committed to the expectation and pursuit of goodness.

Fredrickson (1998, 2004, 2009, 2013) has underlined the transformative character of hope, as one of the ten most frequently experienced positive emotions in daily life, with the effect of fostering personal growth and well-being. The effect of hope, as a positive emotion, is that it broadens the mindset, the scope of attention and the thought and action repertoire, nurturing the psychological, social, intellectual and even physical resources to cope with adversity. The second important effect of hope as a positive emotion is that it transforms the individual for the better. While certain emotions such as a good mood and pleasure nourish hedonic happiness, hope can be considered a part of the eudaemonic domain of flourishing that is connected to inner personal growth, meaning in life and in relation with others (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2009). Because of this broadening and growth effect, hopeful people tend to display a more altruistic and generative behavior by helping others, taking a long-term view of things, instead of satisfying short-term needs, thinking beyond the struggles of the present moment, and adopting moral values such as friendship, gratitude, generativity, selflessness, kindness and inclusiveness towards strangers (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2006). Apart from cognitive (analytical, planning, logical) skills, hope can be nourished by social, religious and spiritual practices such as meditation and prayer, creating a deeper connection to the inner self, to other people and to a higher spiritual power (Fredrickson, 2002, 2013).

Table 1.1 shows a brief summary of the main differences in the conceptualization of hope by the different theories presented until now.

Thanks to an increasing amount of empirical research and theory building efforts, many authors have come to the conclusion that hope is a multidimensional phenomenon and that the diverse and sometimes contradictory definitions and conceptualizations should ideally be integrated into more comprehensive theories and models (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Farran, Herth, & Popovich, 1995; Scioli, Ricci, Nyugen, & Scioli, 2011; Staats & Stassen, 1985). For example, hope cannot simply be reduced only to cognition or emotion, but includes rational, relational, existential and spiritual components, which all interact.

Another learning point has been, that even though hope is a universal human phenomenon, its concrete experience and expression are quite culture specific (Averill et al., 1990). Different cultures and even different groups within society can conceive of hope differently with fundamental implications for example with regard to the objects or events a person may hope for and the kind of actions taken to achieve them (Averill & Sundararajan, 2005). Among the many things a person may hope for are material goods (e.g. more money), personal achievement (e.g.

Table 1.1 Basic polarities in the conceptualization of hope

Personal	Interpersonal
Own capabilities/self-reliance	Trust in others
Cognition	Emotion
Value neutral	Moral values
Personal trait	Human virtue
Self-centered	Self-transcendent
Personal control	Little personal control
Achievement goals	Attachment goals
Universal	Culture specific
Material	Spiritual
Personal efficacy	Faith/beliefs
High probability of fulfilment	Low probability of fulfilment
All types of goals	Life meaning and purpose
Self-interest	Generativity/altruism
Everyday situations	Threatening situations

performance, success), hedonic experiences (e.g. fun, leisure time), interpersonal relationships (e.g. good friends), or altruistic motives (e.g. helping other people). Depending on the objects hoped-for, the activities and actions towards their achievement could also vary significantly: Working harder, becoming better organized, planning activities, being more creative, being more risk-taking, relating with others to get support, relying on faith, meditating, praying, etc. (Averill et al., 1990).

Measuring Hope

The empirical work on measuring hope can be seen in the context of a fundamental tension between the diverse understandings of the phenomenon that should be measured, the question as to whether people would be able to accurately describe their own level of hope at all and the necessity to develop valid instruments for a more comprehensive assessment of hope to improve scientifically sound explanations. The existing variety of hope concepts and theories have given rise to the development of different instruments for its measurement (for an overview see Farran et al., 1995; Lopez et al., 2003). Central questions that have been discussed when developing new measures of hope were their dimensionality and complexity (uni- or multi-dimensional), the method (qualitative or quantitative), the length and parsimony (short or long), the applicability (culture specific or universal), the concreteness (general trait or specific goals), the approach (direct or indirect) and the psychometric properties, fundamentally the convergent and discriminant validity vis-à-vis related constructs such as optimism and self-efficacy.

Especially in non-clinical settings, the measure of hope mostly used has been Snyder's Adult Dispositional Trait Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), which includes

4 items to assess the motivational dimension called Agency, 4 items to assess the cognitive dimension called Pathways and 4 distractors. The Dispositional Hope Scale is relatively short, easy to use and has shown very good psychometric properties such as internal consistency, temporal stability, a good factor structure and good convergent and discriminant validity with other measures such as the Life Orientation Test of Scheier and Carver (1985) (Babyak, Snyder, & Yoshinobu, 1993; Carifio & Rhodes, 2002; Snyder et al., 1991). Despite its extensive use and its merits, Snyder's measure of hope has been questioned from many different standpoints: (1) It only assesses the rational and self-centered thought processes and neglects other dimensions like the relational and spiritual (Farran et al., 1995); (2) it only considers goals and aspects in life which one feels in control of, but is less applicable to situations considered to be out of one's direct control (Tong et al., 2010); (3) many items are nearly identical to items used to measure other constructs such as coping and self-efficacy (Tennen et al., 2002); and (4) Agency and Pathways thinking do not reflect how ordinary people define hope for themselves (Averill et al., 1990; Bruininks & Malle, 2005; Tong et al., 2010).

Relating to alternative conceptualizations of hope, other authors have developed multidimensional scales to assess the cognitive, relational, affective and/or spiritual elements included in their conceptualizations of hope. The instruments mostly used are the Hope Index Scale (Obayuwana et al., 1982) including 60 items and 5 sub-scales (ego-strength, religion, family support, education and economic assets), the Miller Hope Scale (Miller & Powers, 1988) with 40 items representing 3 sub-scales (satisfaction with self, others and life, avoidance of hope threats and anticipation of a future), the Nowotny Hope Scale (Nowotny, 1988) comprising 29 items and 6 sub-scales (confidence in outcome, relates to others, future is possible, spiritual beliefs, active involvement and inner readiness), the Herth Hope Scale (Herth, 1991) with 30 items covering 3 dimensions (cognitive-temporal, affective behavioral and affiliative-contextual), and the shorter Herth Hope Index (Herth, 1992). More recently, Scioli and his colleagues (2011, 2016) have developed the Comprehensive Trait Hope Scale including 56 items belonging to 4 sub-scales (mastery, attachment, survival and spirituality) and a shorter Comprehensive State Hope Scale with 40 items. In the psychiatric context, Schrank, Woppmann, Sibitz, and Lauber (2011) have integrated several dimensions of the Miller Hope Scale, the Herth Hope Index and Snyder's Dispositional Hope Scale into a 23-item long Integrative Hope Scale. All these measures have helped to gain differentiated insights into the various elements of hope. However, important concerns regarding the utilization of these measures relate to the length and complexity of the questionnaires, the possible overlap with associated and similar constructs such as spirituality, and the cultural bias of their implicit definitions (e.g. Tennen et al., 2002; Tong et al., 2010). Therefore, a need for measures still exists that assess hope in a simple and direct manner, and that could be used in several cultures and with different population subgroups. For this, certain authors have been using a one-item hope measure for a quick assessment, e.g. 'I feel hopeful about the future' (Tong et al., 2010).

Another approach trying to integrate quantitative methods and a more differentiated form to take into account the various targets of hope is the development of hope

scales using specific future-oriented goal statements as items, and asking the participants to rate on a Likert scale the importance or desirability of each goal (affective component) on the one hand, and on the other hand the probability, expectancy or likelihood of its attainment (cognitive component) (Erickson, Post, & Paige, 1975; Stoner, 2004). For example, in her Hope Index, Staats (1989) uses 16 short goal statements, of which 8 are self-referenced (e.g. "To be happy", "To have money") and 8 refer to general goals (e.g. "Peace in the world", "The country to be more productive"). The main criticisms of these kinds of methods have been that several items are too specific to the western middle-class culture and probably not applicable to other cultures, that the length of the scales could be too demanding and the double rating for importance and likelihood too complex for certain individuals and finally that it is questionable if the sum of the hope-level in specific circumstances can be equated to a general level of hope (Farran et al., 1995).

A fundamentally different approach is the attempt to qualitatively understand how people implicitly perceive hope in everyday life, independent from the theoretical constructs defined by researchers (Averill et al., 1990; Gottschalk, 1974). The empirical studies using qualitative methods have shown for example that hope has different connotations in different cultures (Averill et al., 1990) and that hope is different from optimism and more similar to wishes in that it refers to situations in which one perceives to have less personal control and the likelihood of achievement is lower (Bruininks & Malle, 2005). These kinds of studies are very useful but they are also rather complex, time consuming and need several speech samples making it more difficult to target a large number of individuals in different places.

The many definitions and measures of hope have resulted in a multifaceted picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny but have also led to a certain confusion and ambiguity of the term (Lopez et al., 2003). To achieve a clearer demarcation and avoid content overlap or confounding, more empirical studies were needed to explore the nature of hope more thoroughly, including related constructs and empirically distinguishing hope from similar concepts such as self-efficacy, etc. (Rand & Cheavens, 2009; Tennen et al., 2002; Tong et al., 2010). There is still an open issue as to how to assess hope directly in order to gain access to individuals' own understanding and an unfiltered judgment of their own level of hopefulness but avoiding the bias of socially desirable or even faked answers (Lopez et al., 2003). Since hope has been regarded as a universal construct but with a variety of connotations and values across cultures, measures are needed that could be applicable in different countries and ethnic groups. For many years now there has been a call for new short, simple and psychometrically sound instruments to measure hope as perceived by ordinary people that can be used in different cultural environments and could be applied to larger demographic samples (Farran et al., 1995).

The Hope-Barometer Research Program

Background and Purpose

The public discourse regarding the future perspectives and societal changes in Europe has been largely dominated by the discussion of risks and crises. Although it is a main task of political and social institutions to recognize new opportunities and to support a positive development in society, the mass media and the general public have focused their attention primarily on the discussion of worries and concerns about the future. The attention on the negative aspects of life has a long tradition, especially in the German speaking countries. Since the early 1970s, the population has been largely surveyed with regard to their major concerns and anxieties e.g. unemployment, social security, retirement provision, health care, personal safety and to what extent they trust (or mistrust) political, economic and social institutions. The study of worries and fears may have a particular value, but it overlooks the phenomenon of self-fulfilling prophecies (Jones, 1977; Jussim, 1986). If we concentrate our attention on the negative side of life, we will start to see mainly negative developments, with the consequence of accentuating the negative even more, leading to a downward spiral, which affects the culture of an entire society. The result of such a self-fulfilling vicious circle was the emergence of a negative cultural bias known by the term “German Angst” (Bode, 2008), which describes the German propensity to see the world through glasses tainted by fears and worries.

For this reason, the Hope-Barometer research program was created in 2009 as a counter-initiative to the classical Worries- and Fears-Barometers with the purpose of explicitly focusing on the positive attitudes and expectations of the population towards the future (Walker & Mueller, 2010). Since then, the Hope-Barometer is a yearly cross-sectional survey with three major objectives: (1) to generate and support a public discourse focusing on positive thoughts and perspectives about the future; (2) to initiate a scientifically sound study of the phenomenon of hope, especially in Europe; and (3) to contribute to the general conceptualization of hope from a European and international perspective. In 2009–2011 the Hope-Barometer was limited to German speaking Switzerland. During recent years the survey was expanded to other countries (which will be presented later) with more than 10,000 people participating in the survey every year. The main results are published annually in several newspapers over Christmas and the New Year with the purpose of conveying good news at a particularly hopeful time of the year.