

Chapter 1

Introduction and Research Agenda



Andreas M. Krafft, Tharina Guse, and Alena Sle Zackova

Abstract This introductory chapter presents the antecedents and the purpose that originated the creation of this book on cross-cultural studies on hope. It sketches the existential and multifaceted nature of hope and points to the array of disciplines that, over many decades and even centuries, have studied the phenomenon of hope from various scientific perspectives and in different contexts. Based on the past focus and the current challenges in psychological research on hope, it pleads for an inter- and transdisciplinary approach to the study of hope in diverse cultural contexts. After briefly introducing a cultural perspective on hope, we present the purpose, development, and research focus of the Hope Barometer international research program. We highlight the necessity to conceptualize hope in a trans-disciplinary and culture-sensitive way and then formulate a number of fundamental research questions that guided the empirical studies reported in this book. Assessing hope across cultures requires the development of measures that, on the one hand, prevent bias in the general conceptualization of hope and, on the other hand, permit the analysis of several elements and dimensions of hope, such as different hope targets, sources, and activities. Hope and its various elements and dimensions are partly rooted in diverse culturally tinted worldviews and values, displaying different correlations and predictors of hope across cultures. A succinct overview of the structure and single chapters of the book aims to show up the overall logic that guided its outline.

A. M. Krafft (✉)

Institute of Systemic Management and Public Governance, University of St. Gallen, St. Gallen, Switzerland

e-mail: andreas.krafft@unisg.ch

T. Guse

Department of Psychology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

A. Sle Zackova

Department of Medical Psychology and Psychosomatics, Faculty of Medicine, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

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1.1 Background

For many decades and even centuries, poets, philosophers, and scientists alike have been fascinated and inspired by the human phenomenon of hope. A huge number of theories and studies on hope have been conceived by numerous researchers from various different disciplines, with several philosophical and normative backgrounds anchored in specific historical and cultural environments. The range goes from the ancient Greeks and the myth of Pandora, through Christian theologians like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, philosophers from different traditions such as the political and moral philosopher Hobbes and the empiricist and naturalist Hume, the Christian philosopher Kierkegaard, the moral philosopher and transcendental idealist of the Enlightenment Kant, the socialist and utopist Bloch, the Christian theologian Moltmann, the existentialist Marcel, the critical educator Freire, and the American pragmatists Dewey and Rorty (for an overview see Blöser, 2020 and Blöser & Stahl, 2017). More recently, many philosophers, theologians, psychologists, and scientists in the fields of futures studies, education, and nursing research have conducted valuable work on hope.

Hope seems to be an existential need in every life situation (Bloch, 1959; Marcel, 1951). Without hope we are unable to live in dignity and much less to experience a fulfilling life (Beck et al., 1990; McGeer, 2004). To hope is an existential feature of what it is to be human (Webb, 2007). Many authors have recognized hope as a fundamental condition for human flourishing (Callina et al., 2018; McCormick, 2017; Snow, 2019; Stitzlein, 2019). Hope is crucial in times of crises and in situations full of uncertainty and anxiety (Scioli & Biller, 2009). Hope appears to be an existential, universal, multifaceted yet simultaneously, to a certain degree, a mysterious and elusive phenomenon not easily studied in a scientific and systematic way (Marcel, 1951; Blöser, 2019). Further, hope contains many spheres and dimensions, ranging from concrete individual hopes to a general and fundamental feeling of hopefulness (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Shade, 2001).

As an example, the fundamental and existential nature of hope has been formulated by Václav Havel, former political dissident, and first democratically elected president of Czechoslovakia after communism and later the first president of the Czech Republic, in one of his letters from prison to his wife Olga:

The more I think about it, the more I incline to the opinion that the most important thing of all is not to lose hope and faith in life itself. Anyone who does so is lost, regardless of what good fortune may befall him. On the other hand, those who do not lose it can never come to a bad end. This doesn't mean closing one's eyes to the horrors of the world—quite the contrary, in fact: only those who have not lost faith and hope can see the horrors of the world with genuine clarity. (Havel, 1989, p. 141).

Until now, beyond all the particular philosophies and theories, there is little consensus throughout all scientific disciplines about the general nature and definition of hope, which makes it very difficult to find common ground to integrate the current state of knowledge and research. What is certain is that hope is a very complex and multifaceted aspect of human experience. Since hope is an essential and existential

part of life, people in different contexts and life situations may experience, understand, nurture, and express hope in many different ways. When thinking about the nature of hope, we have to be aware that in daily life, hope manifests itself in a great variety of forms. Just as there are many modes of feeling love or anxiety, there are numerous types of hope (Milona, 2019, 2020). For example, to hope for a cure from a chronic illness, to hope for one's children or to hope for the end of a war might differ from hoping for good weather during the weekend or to hope for a job promotion or from being hopeful about one's team winning the next match. How people hope is also related to how people face and deal with difficult and challenging situations (Kleist & Jansen, 2016), such as the unexpected pandemic in 2020 and 2021. There seem to exist many ways people can hope, reflecting different psychological processes and states, which can have diverse effects on their lives. When studying hope, researchers must therefore be open to acknowledging the multiplicity and plurality of hope aspects, processes, states, and practices (Green, 2019).

In this introductory chapter, we address the current challenges in the psychological research on hope, briefly describe the cultural perspective that guided our work and present the overall research program of the international network of the Hope Barometer. For several years, we have been working on how hope should be conceptualized and studied across cultures. Here we will pose the main questions that guided our empirical research and theory-building efforts. We discuss the fundamental issues about how to assess hope, highlight the importance of values and worldviews and explain how we analyze the meaning of hope across cultures. Finally, we give an overview of the general structure and the singular chapters of the book.

1.2 Current Research Challenges on Hope

During the last decades, scientists in several disciplines have developed a variety of concepts and models, focusing on single elements of hope. Several academics have investigated the nature and, above all, the positive qualities of hope in a variety of life situations, from early childhood (Erikson, 1959), through school and university (Marques et al., 2011), in times of illness and other hardships (Benzein et al., 2001; Herth, 2005), in the context of life crises (Beck et al., 1990) up to the moment of facing death (Elliott & Olver, 2002, 2007, 2009; Feudtner, 2005). Every philosopher and scientist dedicated to study hope has developed a special interest and a particular view on the phenomenon. Researchers developed particular views on hope based on their individual experience, education, and social context. This has resulted in a wide variety of conceptualizations, definitions, models, and operationalizations of hope and its different dimensions (Elliott, 2005). Hope has been characterized as an emotion, a cognitive process, an existential resource, a state of being, a disposition, a state of mind, an attitude, a social construct, a formed habit, a complex, multifaceted affective-cognitive-behavioural phenomenon, or, quite simply, a mystery (for an overview see Webb, 2007). For some, hope is primarily based on human agency

and connected to people's individual goals, motivation, and cognitive capabilities (Snyder, 1994). For others, hope as a fundamental human emotion is mainly supported by social relationships (Fredrickson, 2004; McGeer, 2004). Others again see hope as basically related to a transcendent Higher Power and consider it to be a religious or human virtue (Pinsent, 2020; Snow, 2019). Some disciplines and authors centered their studies on the broader social and ecological environment (Hicks, 2012; Eckersley, 2002). To some extent, hope is linked to positive expectations about the future. However, it might also differ from future expectations (David et al., 2004) and be intimately tied to negative affect such as uncertainty and worries (Nordensvard, 2014).

Until now, psychologists, philosophers, theologians, and other scientists have not reached a consensus on the question of what hope really is (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2010). Scioli (2020) pointed out that most theories of hope are either under-representations or over-definitions of the phenomenon under study. For example, Snyder's (1994) hope theory can be considered as being too limited in scope. This does not mean that the concepts of agency and pathways are wrong, but they are defining the concept and construct of hope too narrowly or, in some cases, even improperly. On the other hand, other theories tend to be too broad, including too many facets of hope, which describe several dimensions that in a certain context or situation might not be at the core of the concept and can but may not necessarily be present in every experience of hope (Bernardo, 2010; Scioli et al., 2011).

One major difficulty in psychological research on hope over the last decades has been the partial definition of hope based essentially on Western standards. Concerns were raised about hope theories that only focused on performance and self-mastery, overemphasizing individualism, neglecting the interpersonal and social aspects, and ignoring the quality of the many different targets and sources of hope (Scioli, 2020). Cognitive theories of hope, such as that of Stotland (1969) and Snyder (1994), conceptualize hope as an expectation of goal attainment with a high probability of success. Many authors consider that the individualist-cognitive goal-oriented approach reflects a cultural bias toward understanding hope as self-efficacy and outcome expectations. This makes hope very similar to other concepts describing positive future expectations, such as optimism, self-confidence, personal mastery, and perseverance in goal attainment, and does not capture the essential characteristics of hope (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002; Braithwaite, 2004; Bruininks & Malle, 2005; Callina et al., 2018; Martin, 2011; Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2010; Scioli, 2020; Snow, 2019; Stitzlein, 2019; Tennen et al., 2002). Understanding hope as a high probability of achieving personal goals excludes the many other situations and possibilities of experiencing hope, with huge cultural and normative consequences of an oversimplifying individualistic bias (Scioli, 2020). By neglecting the interpersonal, societal, cultural, and normative dimensions of hope, psychological hope theories might have been promoting an egocentric conceptualization of well-being with no discussion about the quality and nature of hoped-for targets and ideals, which, according to several authors, could have serious undesired societal implications (Braithwaite, 2004; Te Riele, 2010; Webb, 2019).

While the constructs of will-power, personal mastery, and perseverance remain important to understanding hope, many authors are concerned because these aspects do not distinguish hope from other similar concepts. Moreover, hope does not always entail setting personal goals, and it is not always based on the efficacy of one's own capabilities. Most theories of hope highlight the fact that hope comes into play when the perceived probability of a wish or desire and the personal control are low (Bruininks & Malle, 2005; Meirav, 2008). Lazarus (1999), for example, argued that it would be wrong to equate hope with successful agency since people can also hope when they feel helpless. Hope is needed when people are confronted with the limits of their own capabilities and when future expectations are not positive anymore (McGeer, 2004; Shade, 2001). A sense of self-efficacy, competence, and control can facilitate the accomplishment of tasks and the achievement of goals, promoting hope, but they do not always encapsulate the essential elements of hope.

Surprisingly, for decades, psychologists have largely neglected the vast literature and empirical findings from other disciplines unraveling the distinct nature and the many facets and elements of hope. As Shweder et al. (2006) have underlined, it is problematic to take theories and measures developed in a certain cultural context or research discipline and uncritically consider them to be universal because they may include underlying assumptions that may not fit the general view of a certain concept. Therefore, we should avoid applying a certain theory of hope uncritically. A one-sided conceptualization of hope as a purely cognitive and individualistic phenomenon, without taking into consideration different cultural values and norms, while simultaneously ignoring alternative theories of hope (both in psychology and other disciplines such as philosophy, theology, sociology, education, and nursing research) has limited our psychological understanding of hope. What is required is a broad assessment of the nature of hope, including other disciplines, to provide a more balanced and differentiated view of hope.

Whereas several authors claim to have identified the central characteristics of hope, we have to be aware of the multiplicity of conceptualizations, dimensions, and elements, and acknowledge that each theory of hope captures something valuable about a particular aspect of its experience. The many conceptions of hope that have been developed by scientists from diverse disciplines can be seen as complementary and enriching. All these considerations reveal the necessity to integrate existing concepts and elements of hope from different research disciplines which each have highlighted a certain aspect or feature of hope in its own right (Callina et al., 2018). Because of its complexity and especially its relatedness to culture, hope research must be inter- and transdisciplinary, combining theories and research findings from psychology, philosophy, theology, and other disciplines into new concepts and models (Scioli, 2020). Our aim is thus to complement and enlarge the psychological conceptualization and research of hope and to test its different elements and dimensions through cross-cultural empirical studies.

1.3 The Cultural Perspective on Hope

Downey and Chang (2014) have noted that, in the field of positive psychology, hope and optimism have been studied in several countries, yet need to be further explored in order to be better understood within the context of culture. For Triandis (1997, p. 443), culture refers to a “shared set of beliefs, attitudes, norms, values, and behaviors organized around a central theme and found among speakers of one language, in one time period, and in one geographic region.” This means that how people in different cultures think, feel, and act can differ in several ways (Suh et al., 2008). Culture influences the way we see ourselves, our own identity, and how we look at the world. It affects our fundamental understanding of the self and the meaning we give to our existence (Rasmussen & Lavish, 2014). Culture is a determinant of how we experience what happens in our lives and how we react to it (Teramoto Pedrotti & Edwards, 2014). The notion of the future and how people perceive the future is also shaped by culture (Kleist & Jansen, 2016). Further, culture affects, at least partially, what we judge as worthy and desirable and by doing so, what we might hope for, both for ourselves and for our environment. If people in a culture or region share some basic beliefs and values which are expressed through common practices that distinguish them from people in other cultures, it is to be assumed that hope could be experienced and would manifest itself differently in diverse cultures.

From a social constructionist perspective, hope is not only rooted in individual attributes but also in interpersonal discourses emerging from socialization and cultural characteristics (Averill et al., 1990; Averill & Sundararajan, 2005; Del Vecchio Good et al., 1990). Dominant and alternative worldviews about the conception and meaning of the world and a good life will affect people’s desires and hopes as well as their ways of hoping. If hope is an existential phenomenon of our being-in-the-world (Billias, 2010), it always will be influenced by the larger frame of reference of the society and culture one is embedded in. Naderi Farsani and Abolghasemi (2008) proposed that beyond the universal predisposition to hope, culture is one of the most prominent variables in explaining and understanding what and how people hope. They further stated that people in different cultures with particular worldviews and belief systems will experience and manifest hope and the act of hoping differently. The authors argued that the phenomenon of hope and hoping is linked to meta-beliefs about what are valuable goals, about the nature of the world and existence in general, about the characteristics of human beings, and about standards of what is right and wrong behavior.

According to Webb, the many modes of hoping arise because “different individuals and social classes, at different historical junctures, embedded in different social relations, enjoying different opportunities and facing different constraints, will experience hope in different ways.” (Webb, 2008, p. 25). From a cultural perspective, each society is characterized by a collective emotional orientation determining different modes of hoping, shaped by certain core ideas, social discourses, beliefs, myths, and collective memories at certain historical points, which are mediated by

social institutions such as the education system, the media, art, etc. Different modes of hoping are based on different notions of the self and human agency, as well as particular orientations towards others and the world in general. Webb eloquently explained this by stating “that the characteristics of hope as a positive orientation toward an uncertain future good can vary immensely depending on the mode in which it is experienced. Thus, for example: hope can be active or passive; secure and trusting or restless and agitated; careful and realistic or ambitious and risky; resigned and accepting or passionate and critical; directed toward individual privatized goals or toward expansive social goals; directed toward a future that defies representation or a future given clear shape and form; apolitical or politically charged; a conservative force or a subversive one.” (Webb, 2019, p. 131).

The different expressions of hope and modes of hoping can be distinguished based on what people hope for, on the sources of hope, on the cognitive-emotional processes and the activities people perform when hoping. The first question, often neglected by psychological hope theories, concerns the kind of hopes people embrace. During the past decades, two broader lines of research have evolved, focusing either on individual goals (e.g., health, academic or professional achievements, etc.), or on social goals (e.g., justice, sustainability, minority rights, etc.). Behind the numerous possible targets of hope, the fundamental question relates to what the hoping person considers to be worth hoping for, which includes a deeper sense of what a good life and a good society entails. The question that follows, is how people relate to these hopes emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally. Moreover, hope is not only an individual mental and affective state but also a social and collective phenomenon.

One major issue that has scarcely been studied until now is to what extent hope can be characterized as a universal phenomenon across the world and to what extent different people in different cultures have diverse understandings and experiences of hope. Comparative studies have revealed that hope manifests and works differently across societies and social groups (Averill et al., 1990; Shin et al., 2013). People in different cultures might have particular conceptions of hope, adopt certain targets of hope as preferable or worthwhile and experience distinct sources of hope as valuable. However, some aspects and elements of hope might be similar across many cultures. Other aspects might be of special interest or value in some cultures but not in others. Individuals can differ in many elements and experiences of hope but share some universal patterns. Whereas some aspects of hope are more or less similar across cultures, other elements might be distinctive for a certain culture or region in a particular epoch of its history.

Until now, we know very little about how people in different cultures value and experience hope, what they hope for and what they do to support their hopes. All these concepts may be experienced differently in varied cultural contexts and thus cannot be researched or applied without consideration of the cultural environment. Therefore, we have to be aware of the cultural context in which hope is perceived, fostered, and expressed. For our research purposes and the studies reported in this book, we understand hope as a universal human phenomenon with culture and group-specific manifestations that make hope vary across nations. Especially the

central dimensions of hope, e.g., the individual-cognitive, the socio-emotional, and the spiritual-religious, may vary from one culture to another. On the one hand, hope is part of our human core; on the other hand, the way it is experienced and how it manifests in certain moments, at a particular time, in the context of a specific culture or social group, emerges as the result of a process of social and cultural mediation (Webb, 2007).

1.4 The Hope Barometer International Research Program

The studies in this book on cross-cultural perspectives on hope are rooted in the discipline of Positive Psychology. Since its beginnings, researchers in Positive Psychology have been very attentive to studying the philosophical groundings of human virtues and character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998), and well-being (Ryan et al., 2013). Following this attitude and approach, the scope of the current book will be inter- and transdisciplinary since it attempts to integrate theories, conceptual models, methods, and empirical findings from several disciplines. We still know very little about the similarities and differences in the cultural factors and manifestations of hope. Therefore, to open the horizon to many aspects of human nature, we start by exploring and broadening our understanding of hope giving an overview of different philosophies and theories relevant to the cross-cultural study of hope. These are of interest since every concept and theory reflects and can be seen as an expression of certain cultural values and worldviews.

1.4.1 Defining and Studying Hope Across Cultures

The Hope Barometer is an annual international cross-sectional survey with the objective of contributing to the general understanding of hope through empirical studies from a cross-cultural perspective. The methodology of the Hope Barometer research program takes an inter- and transdisciplinary approach, drawing on scientific insights and research findings from the fields of philosophy, theology, psychology, futures studies, nursing research, and risk management. Our aim is to investigate areas of hope that have been scarcely researched until now. Therefore, before comparing hope across cultures, we first have to clarify the concept of hope, its elements and components and discuss the basic assumptions behind the current theories and research measures derived from them. We will discuss how scientists and researchers in psychology and other disciplines conceptualize and measure hope. We have to evaluate the theories of hope and their implicit assumptions in order to acquire a deeper and more differentiated understanding of this complex and multifaceted phenomenon. On this bases, we can develop an integrated model of hope that will serve as a guide for the empirical studies and the structure of this book.

There is still a vast need of empirical research and theory building in relation to the nature and experience of hope as well as its dimensions and sources. A main research goal is to understand how people hope, what people hope for, and what sources and conditions help people to maintain hope. It is our task as researchers to reflect on and investigate how hope manifests in different contexts and situations and which factors relate to a sense of hopefulness (Lazarus, 1999; McGeer, 2004). We want to open the horizon to acknowledge alternative conceptualizations of hope but, above all, to understand how people understand and experience hope for themselves, without imposing pre-established definitions. In order to understand how people experience hope in different contexts and situations, it has to be studied not only “top-down” but also from the “bottom-up” (Barilan, 2012; Shin et al., 2013).

We understand hope as a human universal that can be experienced and expressed in different ways (Webb, 2007). Thus, there will always exist a tension between being interested in studying cultural differences and at the same time trying to discover the universal features of hope. Consequently, our studies will have implications for the general theoretical understanding of the phenomenon of hope, the way we measure and assess hope as well as the detection of culture specific dimensions or variations of hope, in addition to universal characteristics or features across cultures. Our aim in this book is therefore twofold: On the one hand we want to achieve a better understanding of how people in different countries experience and express hope. People in different cultures might have distinct ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving in relation to what and how they hope. Beyond identifying the characteristics of individual cultures, it will be of value to recognize common patterns that might be relevant with regard to a better understanding of the basic conceptualization and nature of hope in general. The question is first and foremost about how people in different world regions and throughout different cultures experience the universal phenomenon of hope. On this basis, we want to discover which core values, assumptions, thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors contribute the most to cultivating a hopeful view of the future.

Based on the above-mentioned topics and issues, we can define a list of general research questions:

1. Is hope always and everywhere exclusively a cognitive and individual phenomenon, or are there also other dimensions such as the socio-emotional and the religious-spiritual domains of importance?
2. How do different concepts and measures of hope function in different countries? What and how do we have to measure in order to understand better the nature and quality of hope?
3. What are the differences between samples from different countries regarding the basic elements of hope? Has hope the same contents and meaning in different cultures?
4. How can differences in mean levels of hope across countries be explained? Why do people in different countries maintain higher or lower levels of hope?
5. Are there specific worldviews and values that nurture and support hope among people in different countries?

6. What are the most valued targets of hope for different people? How does culture affect the domains people might choose to hope for because they are especially important to them?
7. Which factors affect the way people hope? What are the main activities that people perform in order to fulfil their hopes? What are the most important sources of hope?
8. What are universal aspects of hope as well as unique elements that influence the way hope is perceived and experienced in diverse countries?
9. What are similar and what are culture specific correlates and predictors of hope in different countries?

1.4.2 Assessing Hope Across Cultures

A central question in hope research is how to assess hope across countries and cultures. When studying the phenomenon of hope, we have to clarify what and how to measure, since different methods will provide different kind of results. In this sense, one major challenge is how to operationalize the construct of hope to allow cross-cultural comparisons without biasing the research with our own values and theories. For example, Snyder's Dispositional Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) taps into nearly the same concepts as Schwarzer and Jerusalem's (1995) Self-Efficacy Scale. Perceived self-efficacy has been defined as an optimistic self-belief that a person can perform difficult tasks, achieve goals or cope with adversity in various life domains. Similarly, to Snyder's hope concept, perceived self-efficacy is related to individual goal-setting, personal engagement, persistence in the face of obstacles and recovery from setbacks, and being considered as resilience and positive resource factor.

Another approach is to ask people about their subjective estimation of their level of hope in an unbiased and direct manner, without imposing a pre-defined understanding about what hope should be or entail. Levels of general hope can be compared across countries if we use a measure of hope that is neutral to the culturally tinted pre-conceptions and definitions researchers from different disciplines and world regions might have. For this, we needed a short, reliable, and comprehensive measure to capture hope as perceived by the people without imposing a certain theoretical concept or pre-defined dimensions. Such a measure should avoid as far as possible any individual bias and could then be connected it to many different elements, dimensions, and life domains. One important task in the Hope Barometer research program was, therefore, to develop the Perceived Hope Scale as a short measure for assessing hope in a direct and unbiased manner (Marujo et al., 2021; Krafft et al., 2019, 2020; Slezáčková et al., 2020).

One aim of the cross-cultural study of hope is to compare mean levels of hope across samples of different countries and to explore the main factors associated with their variance. A major issue for comparing mean values of samples from different nations was to assess the assumption of measurement invariance across languages

and countries. The task is to evaluate whether the meaning of a construct such as hope and the way in which this construct is measured is the same across different groups (Chen, 2007). This was done in several studies with good psychometric results.

The results presented in this book show that throughout the investigated countries, there are significant differences between the levels of general hope related to one's personal life. The level of hope seems to be associated with a variety of individual, social and cultural factors. Diener et al. (2009) have proposed that in certain countries, such as in Latin America, people maintain cultural norms and values that result in a positive disposition towards life that is relative stable independently from concrete economic, political, or even individual situations. Some national differences in hope can be explained by these cultural factors influencing positivity through the fundamental tendency to see life and the future in positive terms.

Beyond the general measure of hopefulness in one's life, our aim is to investigate cross-cultural issues regarding the nature and expressions of hope by applying alternative measures to assess different elements of hope. Averill and his colleagues suggested that the experience of hope may differ with regard to the kind of targets a person may hope for and the kind of actions the person will perform to attain his/her hopes (Averill et al., 1990; Averill & Sundararajan, 2005). In order to explore the several elements of hope and inspired by the work of Averill et al. (1990) and Staats and Stassen (1985), three pools of items have been developed to assess (1) the targets of hope in the form of personal wishes, (2) the sources of hope people turn to or count on, and (3) the activities performed to attain the targets people hope-for (Krafft & Walker, 2018).

The targets of hope belong to things people wish or desire in different domains of their lives: Personal achievements, interpersonal relationships, materialistic targets, hedonistic pursuits, health-related outcomes, altruistic motives, and religious/spiritual experiences. The second instrument consists of hope sources from which people expect to obtain hope. A central question in this regard is whether hope is a purely individual trait or rather a social phenomenon. The items were formulated taking into consideration sources of hope from different domains: individual capabilities, social support, personal experiences, religious faith, etc. The purpose of the third instrument is to gain a better knowledge of what kind of actions people undertake to see their hopes fulfilled. Here again, the items belong to distinct domains of action: cognitive, social, religious, etc. In our studies, these three scales have been used to explore the nomological network of hope as perceived by people, relating them to the values and worldviews of hope, and comparing them with other concepts of hope.

Hope is a complex phenomenon that integrates cognition, emotions, values, and behavior. However, not every dimension of hope is equally relevant in all nations, cultures, or social groups. The question is, how do the experiences and contents of hope differ across nations? Do people put a different emphasis on some components of hope than on others? The importance of different dimensions of hope (cognitive, emotional, motivational, spiritual, etc.) may also vary across social groups. Close

relationships are not only an asset that nurtures hope, but they could be a constitutive component of the very nature of what hope is, in terms of what people experience when they feel hopeful, of what people hope for, of the most important sources of hope and of the activities people perform to see their hopes fulfilled. The studies in this book disclose that there are many similarities but also significant differences across countries with respect to the targets of hope that are considered most desirable, as well as to the most appreciated sources of hope and the activities people perform in order to get their hopes fulfilled.

1.4.3 Values and Worldviews of Hope Across Cultures

Culture involves implicit or explicit assumptions about what is good and right, including certain common ideas, beliefs and values. If culture “can be thought of as a specific way to view the world based on a socially constructed set of beliefs, values, and norms” (Rasmussen & Lavish, 2014), then it will also affect the way we think and feel about the future. Worldviews and value orientations might be important when attempting to understand the nature and the elements of hope. Different dimensions, targets, and sources of hope can be related to cultural values and norms. For example, personal hopes might be guided by personal worldviews and values. The particular values dominant in one or more countries, such as tolerance, care, creativity, power, or performance, can have an influence on the types of hopes and on the sources of hope. Whereas in one context, personal goals and achievements are more valued, in another environment the emphasis could be more on positive relationships to other people. Some individuals rely on the social support of family members and close friends. Other persons ground their hope on their personal capabilities and experiences and still others on their faith in a transcendent Higher Power.

The nature and level of hope can differ along with different worldviews in terms of judgements attitudes about the nature and meaning of the world as well as in terms of images and judgements of oneself. The question is how cultural norms and values influence the phenomenon and experience of hope. A central question of the research presented in this book is therefore: How are values and worldviews related to people’s hopes, to the sources of hope, and to people’s activities to fulfill their hopes? By considering how personal and culturally accepted values and worldviews affect visions of the future, hopes and fears, we can develop a much richer and broader understanding of hope and by doing so open new fields of theory building and research.

1.4.4 Correlates and Predictors of Hope Across Cultures

If people in several nations differ with regard to their levels of hope, the question is which factors contribute to these differences and what are similarities and distinctive characteristics in the cultural dimensions related to hope. One important question in our studies is therefore related to the correlates and predictors of hope across different nations. The predictors of hope can vary across societies and groups, depending on salient norms and values. Some basic assumptions and values may correlate with general hope similarly in several countries. In other cases, the correlations between basic assumptions, values, personal hopes, and the general level of hope could be influenced by culture-specific norms. For example, there could be differences between individualist and collectivist countries. In some countries, factors such as self-efficacy, self-worth, and self-control might be stronger predictors of hope, while in other countries, social relationships could have a relatively higher weight. In some countries, religious and spiritual experiences and values will have a stronger connection with hope than in others.

Throughout the book, we want to assess which determinants of hope are rather universal and which are culture specific. With this, we can start to study the cultural aspects of how people in different countries experience and price hope in their lives. Several studies will report about the commonalities but also interesting differences between countries. One major finding is that there are several predictors of hope in common to most people but also significant differences of effect sizes across countries. For example, self-worth correlates positively with hope across all countries but with different intensity. Furthermore, the association between perceived hope and dispositional hope was more robust in some countries than in others. The factors that are more strongly related to hope will give us an indication of the nature and the different dimensions of the phenomenon.

1.5 Structure and Chapters of the Book

The book comprises ten chapters. The introductory Chap. 2 sets the theoretical and conceptual basis for the cross-cultural studies of hope presented in the following contributions. Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 are dedicated to studying and evaluating the single elements of the hope concept at the individual and societal levels developed in the theoretical chapter. The studies include and compare data from several countries of the Hope Barometer research network and aim to find commonalities and differences between cultures. Chapters 7 and 8 aim to deepen these findings by relating hope to other well-being variables and comparing the results of selected countries with some similar and some individual characteristics concerning historical and cultural backgrounds. Chapter 9 contains studies reporting on how people in several countries coped with stress during the COVID-19 pandemic, putting a particular emphasis on the role and nature of hope and personal growth. The concluding

Chap. 10 summarizes, integrates, and discusses the findings of the previous contributions in a comprehensive way and derives new topics and questions for further research on hope from a cross-cultural perspective.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to laying the grounds for the empirical cross-cultural research program of the Hope Barometer, providing the individual elements and the structure for the studies presented in the book. The chapter starts by giving a brief overview of some of the most relevant theories on hope in psychology, philosophy, and theology integrating them into six main dimensions of hope as cognition, as affect, as agency, as a social phenomenon, as a virtue, and from a religious perspective. Based on the similarities and complementary views of the different conceptualizations of hope, a basic culture-sensitive transdisciplinary concept of hope is presented. The definition of hope in this book seeks to explain the universal features of hope that allows integration of singular dimensions and cultural manifestations as needed. Throughout this book, we understand hope as composed of a wish or desire for a relevant outcome coupled with the belief that its realization is possible (although not necessarily probable or likely) together with the trust in the availability of internal or external resources to make it happen. All three domains are directed and related to different levels such as the individual, the closer social environment, the broader social context, up to the world, and the natural environment at large.

Chapter 3 on “Values and Targets of Hope” presents the empirical study related to the first element of the hope concept described in Chap. 2. The first domain of hope addresses the wishes and desires as well as the fundamental values directed to certain goals or state of affairs. The central elements in this hope domain are the targets of hope. What people hope for is generally connected to their values and interests, to their normative judgements, to what they consider to be desirable for a good life for themselves and for their closer environment. Based on data collected with the Hope Barometer in November 2018 ($N = 5832$) in German- and French-speaking Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, and the Czech Republic, the study analyzes the commonalities and possible cultural differences in the levels of perceived hope, in individual hope targets, and in the effects of particular human value orientations on hope. The findings indicate that hope is not determined by the wealth of a nation (e.g., in terms of GDP) but by personal and collective characteristics, to a certain extent influenced by basic human values. Beyond common features across cultures, this study reveals subtle cultural differences worth to be further investigated in future studies.

In Chap. 4 entitled “Long-term Future Expectations and Collective Hope”, a further facet of the wish/desire domain of the general hope concept is explored. The purpose of the chapter is to draw attention to the phenomenon of collective hope defined as the shared desire for a better future not only for oneself, but for the entire social community, with the belief that a better future for all is possible but not necessarily guaranteed or even likely, and the trust in the human capacity to cooperate and support each other towards the realization of a better world despite current struggles and challenges. In this chapter, the authors combine Positive Psychology with the discipline of humanistic Futures Studies. The interdisciplinary approach was termed “Positive Futures”. The main purpose is to combine individual

future prospects with visions of the good life in a better world and thus to support people in developing a more fundamental hope for happiness and fulfillment. The empirical study with data collected in November 2019 analyzes the subjective expectations of long-term social trends as well as the likelihood and desirability of global scenarios in 12 countries (Australia, Colombia, Czechia, India, Israel, Italy, Nigeria, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, and Switzerland, $N = 10,665$). In today's society, two almost opposite phenomena seem to shape people's lives. On the one hand, a general lack of perspective becomes apparent with regard to social and global developments. We live in a time in which most people, especially in Europe, assume that the future will be worse than the present. On the other hand, most people are rather optimistic with regard to their own future. Positive and negative outlooks in personal and global areas can have an effect on one's own social well-being, characterized by an assessment of the society in which one lives and by one's own role within that society. Thinking about alternative and desired futures can offer people new sources of purpose, meaning, and orientation in life. Images of a better world can give them inspiration and hope. For this, they first need a realistic picture of the good life and of a better world as well as long-term visions for the individual and for society at large.

Chapter 5 on "Worldviews and Basic Beliefs of Hope" concentrates on the second domain of the hope concept, which is the belief in the possibility of fulfillment of a valued wish or desire. According to the widely accepted philosophical notion backed by empirical evidence from psychological studies, hope is distinct from optimism in such a way that the hoping person must believe in an even slight possibility of the attainment of a certain wish, whereas to be optimistic it has to be retained as rather or highly probable. The belief in the possibility or not of the desired outcome is largely of subjective nature and will depend on individual and collective worldviews and beliefs. These beliefs serve as theories to anticipate the future and guide the way people interpret new experiences, especially when a person is confronted with a stressful situation or the feeling of despair. Based on data collected in 2017 in German- and French-speaking Switzerland, Germany, Israel, South Africa, Poland, and Czechia ($N = 6548$), the study in this chapter analyzes the basic assumptions and worldviews of people concerning their perception of the world as good or bad, the meaningfulness of the world, beliefs about oneself, religious faith as well as the pro-social attitude of helping others and correlates them with the general level of perceived hope. Beyond universal patterns, the study supports the idea that certain basic beliefs have distinct effects on perceived hope in different countries and that people in several cultural contexts sustain and perceive hope in different ways.

Chapter 6 on "Trust, Social Support and Hope Resources" deals with the third domain of the hope concept, focusing on forms and expressions of trust related to personal, social, and other resources that encourage people to believe in the realization of the hoped-for outcomes. Following insights from Risk Management the chapter makes the basic distinction between trust and confidence. Trust is a relational phenomenon characterized by uncertainty and vulnerability, supported by shared values such as benevolence, integrity, fairness, and caring. On the other hand,

confidence is a reason-based subjective assessment of high probability expectations, which fits the concept of optimism. Self-confidence embraces the belief in individual achievements, persistence, resilience, self-awareness, knowledge, experience, and personal success, all attributes closely related to the definition of dispositional hope. Two studies analyze the multiple sources and activities of hope in different countries using data collected in 2018 and 2019. Study one comprises 12 countries—Australia, Colombia, Czechia, India, Israel, Italy, Nigeria, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, and Switzerland ($N = 10,193$)—and aims to analyze several personal and external hope sources with a specific focus on social support, religiosity, and the feeling of luck in relation to hope. Study two was performed with eight samples from seven countries—German- and French-speaking Switzerland, France, Spain, Portugal, Czechia, Poland, and South Africa ($N = 6245$)—centering on the assessment of several hope activities and their effects on perceived hope. The findings highlight the importance of external factors of hope, demonstrate the differential nature of perceived and dispositional hope, and show significant differences between countries.

Chapter 7 entitled “Hope and mental health among Czech and Polish adults in a macrosocial perspective and religiosity context” presents the outcomes of the empirical study exploring the role of hope in the context of depression and anxiety, positive mental health, and loneliness. It also focuses on exploring the age- and religion-related differences between the respondents from the two Central European countries, which both underwent a significant socio-political change in the late 1980s, share similar cultures and languages, but they significantly differ in other areas such as religiosity. The sample consisted of 526 Czech and 481 Polish adults who completed the Hope Barometer questionnaire. The results showed that both samples demonstrated similar patterns in predictors of positive mental health. However, significant differences were observed in positive and negative indicators of mental health. The obtained results are discussed within a broader framework of life experiences on the micro- and macro-level in the context of Central European countries that recently underwent macrosocial transitions.

Chapter 8 “Hope and flourishing”: A cross-cultural examination between Spanish and South African samples” explores the commonalities and differences in hope between a Spanish ($N = 206$) and South African ($N = 100$) sample based on data collected with the Hope Barometer in November 2018. The chapter further investigates similarities and differences in the sources of hope between the two samples, as reflected in the activities that people engage in to fulfil their hopes and to attain the hoped-for targets (hope activities). The authors also examine these activities as predictors of hope. Finally, they explore the role of sociodemographic indicators as predictors of hope and flourishing. The results indicated that South African participants had higher levels of hope than the Spanish sample. There were also differences and commonalities in terms of endorsement of specific hope activities. These findings highlight the need to conduct more cross-cultural research on hope and pave the way for further cross-cultural understanding of this important human resource.

Chapter 9 “Mastering the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis—From Anxiety to Hope” addresses the question of how people in different countries perceived and dealt with

the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The studies in this chapter report selected results of the Hope Barometer survey during the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021, analyzing and comparing data from Australia, Czechia, France, India, Italy, Nigeria, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, and Switzerland. Relating to cross-sectional data collected in November 2019 ($N = 9092$), November 2020 ($N = 9536$), and November 2021 ($N = 9093$), the central aim of the studies is to investigate the culture-specific choices of different coping styles as well as the perception of stress, hope (as the counterpart of anxiety), well-being, and personal growth. The findings highlight the importance of trust in other people as well as in a transcendent Higher Power for solving existing problems, overcoming concrete difficulties, and, by doing so, mastering the crisis successfully, which is predominant in collectivistic societies.

Chapter 10, “Beacons of Hope in a Challenging World”, serves to conclude the findings reported across the various chapters and to highlight salient aspects thereof. It further provides an example of implementation of the proposed hope model in an educational context. Finally, we propose a future research agenda and suggestions for practice.

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Andreas Krafft holds a doctoral degree in Management Sciences at the University of St. Gallen (Switzerland) with special focus on Organizational Psychology, Culture and Development. He has academic specializations in Social Psychology of Organizations, Work and Health Psychology as well as Positive Psychology from the University of Zürich. Andreas is associate researcher for Futures Studies and lecturer at the Institute of Systemic Management and Public Governance at the University of St. Gallen. Furthermore, he teaches at the University of Zürich in the field of Work and Health, at the Master of Applied Positive Psychology at the University of Lisbon, Portugal, as well as at the Master of Futures Studies from the Free University Berlin. He is co-president of swissfuture, the Swiss Society for Futures Studies, member of the executive board of SWIPPA (the Swiss Positive Psychology Association) and of the DACH-PP (German speaking Association of Positive Psychology). Since many years he leads the International Research Network of the Hope Barometer.

Tharina Guse is a counselling psychologist and obtained an MA (Counselling Psychology) degree from the Potchefstroom University (now North-West University) in 1989. She was in full-time private practice for the next 15 years providing psychotherapy for children, adolescents and adults. In 2003 she obtained her PhD (Psychology) from Potchefstroom University. She returned to academia in 2005 and joined the University of Johannesburg. Since April 2018 she is a professor and Head of the Department of Psychology at the University of Pretoria. Currently she serves on the Professional Board for Psychology of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). She is also President of the recently founded South African Positive Psychology Association (SAPPA). Her research focuses are on positive psychology in general and in particular on psychosocial well-being, positive psychology interventions and psychological strengths such as hope and gratitude. Closely aligned with this broad focus she also conducts research on the application of hypnosis for the promotion of mental health and well-being.

Alena Slezackova, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Psychology and a Vice Head of the Dept. of Psychology and Psychosomatics, Faculty of Medicine, Masaryk University, in Brno, Czech Republic. Her scientific interests include mainly hope, mental health, and well-being. She also has a special interest in the research and practice of mindfulness. Alena is a founder and director of the Czech Positive Psychology Centre (CPPC), a member of the Advisory Council of the International Positive Psychology Association (IPPA), and a member of the Executive Board of the European Network for Positive Psychology (ENPP). She has been a member of several international research projects, and she serves on the editorial boards of five academic psychological journals. Alena is the author of the first comprehensive monograph on positive psychology in the Czech language and dozens of scientific publications in positive psychology and health psychology.

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