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Hope as psychological capital in Futures Studies

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in Futures Studies

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Hope

“Everything that is done in the world is done by hope. No merchant or tradesman would set himself to work if he did not hope to reap benefit thereby.” Martin Luther, theologian

“To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives.” Howard Zinn, historian

“Yesterday is but a dream,
Tomorrow is only a vision.

But today well lived makes every yesterday a dream of happiness, and every tomorrow a vision of hope.” Kālidāsa, poet

How does hope show in our lives? Where does it come from? How could it be used in Futures Studies? This study aspires to answer these questions and open the discussion of the vital role of hope in the field of Futures Studies. Although hope is a fundamentally futures-oriented venture as hope can only be directed towards what has not yet transpired, its in-depth analysis has largely been ignored in Futures Studies research. My firm belief is that by understanding hope in the context of Futures Studies we can discover ways to inspire hope to better empower individuals as active participants in the formation of their own futures.

We are living in difficult times: tensions in world politics, deteriorating economic situation, increased inequality, and rising extremist movements are central topics of discussion. The political, economic, and social atmosphere influence our beliefs about the future. During times like these the importance of hope is highlighted. “We are facing a hope crisis caused by the lack of essential ingredients of hope: at least one exciting future goal, belief in power to make it happen, and at least one person to cheer for us.” (Luthans et al. 2015, 86) Hope brings us comfort and allows us to tackle humanity’s greatest challenge: hopelessness.

Hope is a complex subject of which there are as many definitions as there are people. Some view it as an innate quality, to some it is a matter of conscious effort. This study seeks to understand what do we talk about when we talk about hope. I argue that the level of hopefulness forms a hope capital that is separate from psychological capital and seek

to explain how this capital is gathered and what benefit it holds for Futures Studies.

1.2 Objective of the study

The issue central to this study is how hope is defined in the context of Futures Studies and how it could further be inspired as positive futures images. The goal is to understand where hope comes from and how it is maintained. This is done through a qualitative study using the grounded theory approach. The material for this study are writings on hope by Finnish people, gathered in collaboration with the Finnish Literature Society (Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, SKS).

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of hope in the field of Futures Studies. More specifically, it studies the role hope has in the construction of futures images and their maintenance. The main objectives are to explore what hope means and if it can be instrumentalized as a tool in a Futures Studies context.

1.3 Outline of thesis

This study is divided into six sections: introduction, theoretical framework, research material and methods, analysis of the research material, discussion, and conclusions. The theoretical framework is comprised of three main theories: images of the future by Anita Rubin (1998a), hope theory by C.R. Snyder (2000), and psychological capital by Luthans et al. (2015). Following the theoretical framework, the research material and the grounded theory method used in the study are discussed. In the analysis section, the different manifestations of hope are explored. The discussion section focuses on discussing the different manifestations of hope present in the research material, explaining the hope capital model, and if it can be used in Futures Studies. Finally, the results and discussion are summarised in the conclusions section where methodological qualities of the study will also be discussed.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Imagining the future through images of the future

“An image of future is a mental construction dealing with possible future states. It is composed of a mixture of conceptions, beliefs and desires, as well as observations and knowledge about the present. This affects a person’s choices both consciously and unconsciously and is derived from both reality and from imagination. Ultimately it steers one’s decision-making and actions.” (Rubin 1998a, 82.)

An image of the future combines one’s presumptions and beliefs, world views and world images, memories as well as long-term goals into mental images about what one perceives as probable, possible, and preferable to happen in the future (Rubin 1998a, 77, 82; Rubin 1998b, 488; Bell 1998, 327). The term was coined by Fred Polak and Kenneth Boulding in the 1950s (Rubin 1998b, 499).

Although mental constructions, images of the future influence behaviour that in turn shapes how the future develops, both on conscious and unconscious levels. For example, a positive image of the future encourages behaviour to reach the imagined positive state. (Rubin 1998a, 10, 80–81.) Behaviour and decision-making in the present moment are strongly influenced by the images of the future (Rubin 1998b, 498): “As they travel through time, people orient and guide themselves, more or less self-consciously, using their cognitive maps of the future, their hopes and fears” (Bell 1998, 327). The variety of choices an individual has at their disposal is presented through the versatility of the images of the future (Rubin 1998b, 499). In addition, behaviour is affected by the balance of the present moment and future gratification, which is connected to the ability to understand the consequences of one’s actions. Some argue, for example, that criminal behaviour is caused by the inability to imagine such consequences. (Bell 1997, 82.)

Imagining alternative futures “helps us to understand, predict, and control our environment” (Ben-Ze’ev 2000, 200) by turning social and physical phenomena into something easier to control (Rubin 1998a, 77). Conjuring such images practices skills like hypothetical thinking, the ability to distinguish between imagination and reality, and understanding causal relationships (Shepperd et al. 2006, 17). What is emphasised about the past, the present, and the future depends on the individual and their worldview (Raustevon Wright & Kinnunen 1983, 5). A person’s values, beliefs, experiences, and prospects as well as their present situation are reflected in their image of the future (Wang 2000, 251). Expectations about the future and how readily it can be made reality are reflected in their futures orientation (Nurmi 1989, 17;

(Rauste-von Wright & Kinnunen 1983, 5). Individual's values and beliefs as well as their experiences and prospects as well as their present situation are reflected in their image of the futures (Wang 2000, 251). The expectations about the future and how readily it is made reality are reflected in their futures orientation (Nurmi 1989, 17; Rubin 1998a, 77).

Images of the future present themselves in a framework of time (Riner 1998, 354). Their nature depends on future time perspective, i.e. the time beyond the present moment. The further away from the present moment the image takes place and the more global it is in character, the less thought and details are devoted to it. (Rubin 1998a, 88.) Images of the future are a form of mental time travel, which involves the ability to unground oneself from the present moment and mentally construct future events. Individual differences, such as the ability to do creative problem solving, openness to new experiences, tolerance for change, flexibility, adaptability, and hopeful outlook on life, influence the process. (Fortunato & Furey 2011, 21.) Ambitions and fears for the future do not always correspond with knowledge; often they do not, and may even contradict it (Masini 1993, 6). Rather, they are based on value judgements (Bell 1998, 330) and influenced by emotions, subjective experiences as well as their personal understanding of the present. Constructing images of the future is not a rational process. (Rubin 1998b, 498.)

2.2 Personal images of the future(s)

People give personal meaning to the futures they anticipate (Nurmi 1989, 13). Futures are formed by structuring the social and natural environments around us, although this process is not always understood, or even conscious (Bell 1998, 323). Preferred futures are not only imagined, but also chosen and built (Masini 2006, 1159). In their book 'Why Futures Studies' Masini (1993, 7) discusses the main principles of Futures Studies. The second and third principles are relevant here. The second principle of future spaces illustrates that the only temporal space one can impact is the future; past cannot be changed, and neither can be the present. The third principle of the multiplicity of futures highlights the supposition that no one future exists. Instead, different futures are created through personal values and choices; possible futures are based on knowledge and information and preferable futures are based on personal and social values. (Masini 1993, 7–9.)

One could therefore argue that instead of discussing images of the future, one ought to discuss the images of the futures. Using futures instead of a future would represent the plurality of futures. However, an individual does not maintain all possible futures with them at all times: the futures are categorised into possible, probable, and preferable futures. Since the focus of this study is on the preferable images of the future, and a person typically does not hold many differing ones simultaneously and because "images of the

future” is terminology used by Rubin (1998a, 1998b) and Bell (1998), images of the future is the chosen term in this study, as well.

The purpose of producing images of the future is to encourage people to explore alternative futures and become responsible actors in their lives: “Any adequate theory of modern society must include people as active, purposeful, and innovative beings, whose future-oriented behavior helps create not only their own future but also the social order itself.” By examining the images and rejecting the belief that change cannot be achieved, people become responsible of the path of their own futures. (Bell 1998, 323, 336–328.) The future that eventually unfolds is a combination of mental and non-mental processes: thinking, planning, guessing, decision-making, accomplishments, and actions (Rubin 1998a, 22). Reflecting the past and orienting towards the future are done simultaneously (Rauste-von Wright & Kinnunen 1983, 4).

Tonn and Macgregor (2009) studied how thinking about the future affects decision-making. When hearing the word ‘future’, people usually think approximately fifteen years ahead. In addition, people tend to think less of the future than the present. In the study, it was also discovered that people rely on their personal experiences to make decisions about the future and their imagination to prepare for it. Individual reactions to the future differ based on age, gender as well as methods for decision-making. (ibid., 118–122.)

Decision-making relies on the future on two levels: the future is created through the awareness that the choices made in the present moment influence how the future unfolds, and the image of the future impacts actions in the present moment. Images of the future and actions are in synergy with each other in everyday decision-making. (Rubin 1998a, 22, 24, 86.) Nurmi (1989, 14) describes orientation to the future as a multidimensional process consisting of motivation (i.e. goals), planning (i.e. how those goals are achieved), and evaluation (i.e. how realistic the goals are). Mental goals are not static; instead, they are constantly listed, revisited and developed further (Snyder et al. 2006, 101).

Goal thinking is a futures-oriented process because goals are continuously compared against images of the future. Goals provide the basis for self-evaluating performance; accomplished goals support positive self-image. (Nurmi 1989, 15–17.) Most intentional human behaviour is characterised by trying to achieve a desired future state (Snyder et al. 2006, 100). Motivation, thus, grows from the inconsistency between the present state and the ideal state (Reeve 2005, 202). Goals are a fundamental part of planning. Successful planning requires a mental image of the goal and a strategy to achieve it (Nurmi 1989, 16; Snyder 2000, 13). For a goal to inspire motivation, it must be clearly specified, challenging, trackable, and internalised (Reeve 2005, 207).

Futures thinking is strongly influenced by subjective experiences. The most meaningful memories are those linked to strong emotions. Recollection of such memories aids decision-making as behaviour and preferences are moulded by memories. People tend to repeat the circumstances they connect to positive things and avoid those connected to

negative emotions. (Levine et al. 2006, 271.) For example, the way one remembers past relationships may affect their future ones. If one mostly remembers the pain caused by the end of a relationship, they may be more cautious to pursue another one. As future is devoted less thought than the present, it also follows that emotions relating to the future are often less intensive in nature than those relating to the present moment (Ben-Ze'ev 2000, 474).

2.3 Discussion of hope in academic literature

Hope is a “positive motivational state” (Snyder 2002, 250) in which realistic goals are expected to be attained through determination, energy, and the belief that one has control over their accomplishments (Benzein & Saveman 1998, 323; Luthans et al. 2015, 83). It is a fundamental framework of human life (Ben-Ze'ev 2000, 475) and serves many roles. It acts as a coping mechanism, survival strategy as well as a source of optimism and motivation (Wang 2000, 248–249).

According to Luthans et al. (2015, 86), hope is a personal characteristic but also capable of changing. It can be viewed as a personality trait or a state of being—or both (Luthans & Jensen 2002, 307). Traits and states exist on a continuum, and they are subject to change to a certain extent. Luthans et al. (2010, 43) describe the continuum from pure states to pure traits with state-like and trait-like constructs falling between the two ends (figure 1). They place hope as part of psychological capital as a state-like construct (psychological capital is discussed further in 2.6.). Hope is an “enduring mind-set” affected by fluctuations (Luthans & Jensen 2002, 307). It is a unique subjective experience, the target of which can be the individual themselves or others around them (Benzein & Saveman 1998, 325; Wang 2000, 249).



Figure 1. The state–trait continuum (Luthans et al. 2010, 43)

Hope is a fundamentally futures-oriented process: what is hoped for may be in the next second, next week or even years away, but it is always in the future (Benzein & Saveman 1998, 323), as neither the past or the present can be changed. It combines anticipation and self-reflection, and a cognitive motivational state with an image of the future that has an intermediate chance of being realised (Snyder et al. 2006, 101; Luthans et al. 2015, 101), although Ben-Ze'ev (2000, 478) argues that hope is generated even when the likelihood

is non-existent. A positive image of the future that has personal significance is involved in hopeful thinking (*ibid.*, 477).

What people mean when they talk about hope, however, differs greatly from one person to another. Some consider hope to be wishful thinking, an optimistic attitude, or even an illusion (Luthans et al. 2015, 82). In history, it has been portrayed as both a positive and a negative trait, from the necessity of life to empty promises (Luthans & Jensen 2002, 306). Optimism is closely related to hope, the difference being that optimism is an attitude rather than an emotion (Ben-Ze'ev 2000, 477). Optimism is the expectation that one will generally experience positive things in life (Luthans et al. 2002, 309). Optimism and pessimism in general refer to the generalisation of expectations individuals have for their future (Palgi et al. 2011, 1294). While hope is a matter of a person's values, optimism is about assessing one's situation (Ben-Ze'ev 2000, 477). Optimistic people find their futures more controllable (Rubin 1998a, 87).

Optimism has been found to have health benefits: optimistic people are happier, better adjusted, suffer less from anxiety, and recover better from coronary events (Shepperd et al. 2006, 14). Optimists can internalise the positive and externalise the negative, which leads to increasingly positive expectations about the future (Luthans et al. 2008, 821). Hope has benefits for athletic and academic outcomes and higher performance in other fields (Luthans et al. 2010, 45). Optimism nurtures motivation and successful performance (Oettingen & Mayer 2002, 1198). In optimism positive outcomes are expected from external sources, whereas hope places the responsibility of positive outcomes on the individual (Luthans & Jensen 2002, 310). Another definition can be found in a Bryant & Cvengros (2004) study in which optimism and hope were compared. The study concluded that hope refers to the attainment of specific personal goals, whereas optimism refers to the (positive) quality of the outcomes in general. (*ibid.*, 298.)

The ability to think about different temporal spaces—the past, the present, the future—is central to the human cognitive ability (Norem & Smith 2006, 35). “People become human the moment they think about the future” (Masini 2006, 1158), which makes futures thinking a fundamentally human quality. Temporal thinking is a reciprocal process where past influences the future, and the future influences the past (Snyder 2000, 250–251). Although hopeful thinking is a futures-oriented process, past experiences are an equal part of maintaining it (Snyder et al. 2006, 103). Hopeful thinking begins developing already in childhood, and is developed best when children can encounter obstacles, and find alternate paths on their own. Past failures are hope lessons for the future. (*ibid.*, 104–105.) Learning from the past, i.e. hindsight, and learning from the future, i.e. foresight, are interconnected processes (Bryant & DeHoek 2006, 231–232).

The risks-as-feelings framework (figure 2) by Loewenstein et al. (2001, 270) depicts the role of emotions in decision-making and their role in cognitive evaluation (Nofsinger

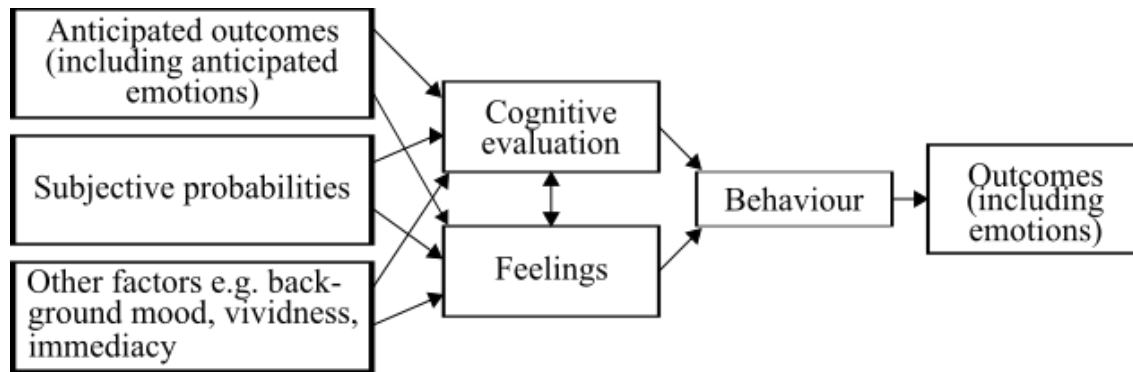


Figure 2 Risk-as-feelings framework (Loewenstein et al. 2001)

2005, 146). Some researchers see hopeful thinking as a cognitive process, others as an emotional one. Emotions are related to the positive and negative changes in a person's life, and the ability to imagine an alternative to the present situation is essential in their generation. Social concerns are crucial in the birth of emotions, and emotions themselves are socially contagious. (Ben-Ze'ev 2000, 13, 24, 191.)

However, hope as an emotion is concerned with existential issues instead of social comparison. Ben-Ze'ev (2000) classifies hope as an emotion where the responsible agent is the individual themselves. In this categorisation, hope and fear are closely related: hope represents the positive and fear the negative. Both emotions are oriented to the future. Hope is not as intense as other emotions, and some have argued that it does not involve behavioural symptoms. (ibid., 24, 473–474.)

The emotional state of the individual and their behaviour is influenced by anticipated outcomes (possible images of the future), subjective probabilities related to the individual, likelihood of alternative scenarios, and other factors, such as the vividness of the images, the temporal time frame as well as personal histories. Feelings motivate action: positive feelings motivate behaviour that will lead to the continuation of such feelings, and negative feelings lead to avoidance strategies. (Nofsinger 2005, 145–146.)

The nurture of hope has advantages for the individual, the entire society as well as the labour market. Hopeful human resources are needed in the modern turbulent work environment. Although children can change their hope state easier, it is also possible for adults to become more hopeful. The malleability of hope presents opportunity to strengthen positive qualities for an improved performance—hope training can, for example, be used to calm nervousness about robotization. Companies with hope strategies in place are more profitable and have higher levels of employee satisfaction. (Luthans & Jensen 2002, 305–313.)

2.4 Hope theory

Snyder's hope theory (see for example Snyder 2000 and Snyder 2002) is an influential theory according to which hope is comprised of three components: goals, pathways, and agency (Snyder 2000, 12–13). Hope is the ability to imagine pathways towards a goal and the motivation required to reach the goal (Snyder 2002, 249). Pathways refer to the different possible paths towards a goal (Snyder 2000, 13) and agency to the willpower required in the process (Luthans et al. 2008, 821).

All systematic human behaviour is goal-oriented (Snyder 2000, 13). While goals differ on their time scale (short-term versus long-term goals) and their complexity, according to Snyder (*ibid.*) they need to be attainable but uncertain to inspire hopeful thinking, although later Snyder (2002, 250) writes that also high and low probability can generate hope. In addition, there are different ways to define goals. In approach goals the aim is to achieve, preserve, or progress a preferable image of the future whereas avoidance goals aim for averting or delaying an undesired state (Snyder et al. 2006, 101–102). Performance goals are based upon a normative evaluation of competence, and mastery goals concern developing a capability (Reeve 2005, 177).

Approach and avoidance goals may lead to the same outcome but are framed differently (Coats et al. 1995, 1058). For example, “I will start eating healthier” and “I will stop eating junk food” have the same goal of a healthier diet. Approach goals have been found to be easier to achieve, though, due to the limited nature of self-regulation (Luthans et al. 2015, 87). There are psychological benefits in focusing on positive and success. For example, in a study about the connection of approach and avoidance goals and psychological well-being, it was discovered that avoidance goals are connected to low self-esteem and low optimism, and approach goals, on the other hand, are connected to lower depression figures. (Coats et al. 1995, 1058–1060.) The key to successful goals is precision: vague, unprecise goals are more challenging to achieve because it is more difficult to develop pathways towards such goals (Snyder et al. 2006, 101). However, having a goal in the first place aids success as those with a goal perform better than those without one (Reeve 2005, 204).

Pathway thinking is the ability to generate alternate possible routes of action to a desired goal (Snyder 2000, 13). Pathways are a way to connect the present moment to the imagined future (Snyder et al. 2006, 103). When a goal is created, there is at least one principal route towards it. High-hope people have been found to be able to generate multiple, alternative routes, have more defined strategies, exhibit more confidence about reaching their goals, (*ibid.*; Snyder et al. 2006, 103) and are less distracted from their goals (Reeve 2005, 255). In addition, the goals of high-hope people are more ambitious (Ben-Ze'ev 2000, 478). Peterson & Byron (2008, 797) studied the relationship of hope and performance in four studies and concluded that hopefulness has a positive influence

on work performance. People who exhibit low amounts of hope have been found to have poorer planfulness and are especially disadvantaged during challenging times (Luthans & Jensen 2002, 306).

Agency is the motivational component in hope theory. Agency is the belief that one is able to achieve the goal with the pathways they have conjured (Snyder 2000, 13). It involves both the desire to reach the goal and the perseverance to adhere to it (Luthans & Jensen 2002, 306). Snyder (2000, 13) describes it as “the motivational horsepower that drives the hope engine”. The motivational factor in hopeful thinking is especially important when one faces an obstacle and must find an alternative path to the goal. (ibid.; Snyder et al. 2006, 103). Hopeful thinking requires the constant re-calculation of agency and pathways: the motivation derived from agency inspires new pathways, and successful pathways inspire agency. The two aspects feed on each other, are essential in the process and promote open-ended and creative thinking. (Snyder 2002, 251; Luthans et al. 2015, 83–86.)

Not all hopeful thinking leads to success. In these situations, the hope is based on illusions, the goals are unsuitable, or the pathways are weak (Snyder 2002, 264). People exhibit positive bias in three aspects: how they view themselves, their ability to control their own situation, and the control they have over their future. According to Ben-Ze’ev (2000), people paint unrealistically optimistic and hopeful views of the future. Optimism bias and positive illusions are, to a certain limit, beneficial to mental health as they promote general happiness. Positive illusions promote motivation and persistence. There is a difference between positive illusions and denial. Positive illusions alter statistical reality but do not misconstrue the actual reality whereas illusions distort reality and can be harmful. Moderate amounts of positive illusions help coping in life. (Ben-Ze’ev 2000, 204–208.) Overt optimism portrays equal lack of sense of proportion as overt pessimism (Ushcanov 2015, 164).

2.5 Social mood

Social mood is the collective mood of a society. Mood is more persistent and long-lasting than emotions as well as more scattered in nature: mood might not have a target, and it can be nonintentional. (Ben-Ze’ev 2000, 87; Burke 2004, 27.) Moods exist in positive and negative affect states (Reeve 2005, 316). Though an individual has their own mood and tendency for optimism, pessimism or something in between, the society in general is affected by collective opinions and beliefs shared in interaction with others (Nofsinger 2005, 147). Social mood is the “aggregated mood of individuals” (Olson 2006, 194). It affects the behaviour of social groups and characterises their attitudes towards the present situation (Barinov 2012, 91).

Positive social mood invites investment and productive activities and is associated with optimism, contentedness, and hope whereas decreasing social mood invites pessimism and conservatism (Nofsinger 2015, 147). Social mood impacts financial decisions, investments, consumer behaviour, general attitude towards the economy, and social actions in the economy (Olson 2006, 194; Nofsinger 2015, 144–145, 147).

Personality dimensions provide the foundation of social mood. Affects, i.e. the emotional responses to triggers, can be positive, pleasant feelings (happiness, enthusiasm, emotional engagement) or negative, unpleasant feelings (sadness, fear, anger). The different affects can also co-exist in a person. Positive affect and social mood influence perception of trust. (Olson 2006, 194–195.)

2.6 Psychological capital

Traditional discussion of capital has focused on economic and financial capital (Luthans et al. 2015, 4). Capital is “any asset that is valuable for the production of other assets” (Tamer et al. 2014, 965). Social capital is distributed in networks, which reproduce norms and shared meanings (Lang & Ramírez 2017, 53). Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu focused much of his work on cultural capital. In cultural capital, there is a divide between elite culture and popular culture; elite culture, like property, is not equally accessible for everyone and is gained at others’ expense. (Bennet et al. 2009, 11.)

Luthans et al. (2010) introduces the concept of psychological capital. Differing from other forms of capital, psychological capital concerns one’s present and future capabilities and includes human and social capital abilities (Luthans et al. 2015, 6). Psychological capital is the combination of different traits: self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. Self-efficacy is the ability to act to achieve a goal, resilience the ability to survive from hardships and optimism the general positive outlook. (Probst et al. 2017, 75–76.)

Psychological capital focuses on positive, subjective experiences (Reeve 2005, 411). People with high psychological capital can evaluate the past, the present, and the future in a more positive light (Probst et al. 2017, 76). Positive psychological capital answers the questions “who are you now?” and “who do you want to become?” (Tamer et al. 2014, 964). Luthans et al. (2010, 61) pilot study of the development and training of psychological capital suggests that psychological capital can be trained.

3 RESEARCH MATERIAL & METHODS

3.1 Objectives of the study & research questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the concept of hope in the context of Futures Studies. The goal is to especially study the relationship between hopeful thinking and empowering images of the future. The main objectives are to explore what hope means in this context and whether it can be instrumentalized as a tool for Futures Studies. The research questions are the following:

1. What different manifestations of hope are present in the research material and what do they express about futures orientation?
2. How do these manifestations of hope act as psychological capital?
3. Can the psychological capital be instrumentalized by Futures Studies to empower people as active agents in their own futures? If yes, how?

3.2 Research material

The research material used in this study is a survey done in collaboration with the Finnish Literature Society (*Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura*, SKS). SKS is a non-governmental organisation that collects and archives Finnish written and oral cultural history. One form of material collection performed by the SKS are *muistitietokeruut*, memory collections where SKS announces the topic, some general guidelines and assisting questions, and a deadline for submissions. Anyone can then submit a text describing their opinions and memories on the topic. The respondents choose the focus and the length of their text themselves. Photographs may also be submitted. The respondents can submit their texts under their own name or an alias, any other information (such as age, address, profession, gender) is voluntary. SKS then stores the material in their Helsinki archive where it is available for any researcher to use.

The topic of the survey and the guideline instructions for the submissions were created for this study. The submission period for the survey was 1.4.–31.8.2017. The original survey brochure in Finnish can be found as an appendix. The guidelines are translated into English below:

“Describe your relationship with hope.

Are you a hopeful person? Why? How does hopefulness show in your life? How does hope affect your actions? Have you experienced hopefulness or hopelessness particularly in some part of your life? Describe such a situation. How has hope

demonstrated itself in situations where you didn't know what was going to happen? How did hope affect the decisions you made? What were you hoping for? What are you hoping now?

What does the word 'hopefulness' mean to you?

What does the word 'hopelessness' mean to you?

What has been the source of hope during your life?

How do your loved ones (for example family and friends) affect your hopefulness? Are you a naturally hopeful person, or do you have to work for it? How does the societal situation affect your hopefulness or hopelessness? Do you see hope around you? What things support hopefulness? Is hopefulness preferable? Why?

Do you see your own future full of hope?

How has your attitude to your own future changed in different parts of your life? What experiences do you have from situations where the significance of hope has been emphasised? Describe your experiences.”

A total of twenty-eight texts were submitted through the survey by the end of August 2017. Most of the submissions were via the electronic form on the SKS website or via e-mail. Some were sent via mail. Twenty-five of the texts were used as research material for this study; two submissions were declined due to illegible handwriting, and one submission was unrelated to the topic. The twenty-five texts that were used were 18,718 words in total. Their length varied between 102 and 2,386 words, the average being 749 words per text.

The respondents were not required to give additional information. Out of the twenty-five submissions, twenty-two submitted their text under their own name and three under an alias. Fourteen respondents provided information about their age, the average age being 54. The youngest respondent was sixteen and the oldest seventy-seven. Five of the respondents were male and twenty were female. All submissions were in Finnish.

The answers are available at the SKS archive at Helsinki (Hallituskatu 1, 00171 Helsinki) and each answer is referred to with their archival code “SKS KRA. Toivo #. 2017.” in the footnotes with the hashtag signifying the number of submission. Quotations are provided both as an English translation (translation by me) and in their original Finnish in the footnotes when passage is quoted for the first time (further quotations are provided only in English with the archival code in the footnotes).

3.3 Method: Grounded theory

A form of applied grounded theory was used as a qualitative content analysis method for this study. Grounded theory is a research method in which (hypo)theses and theories are generated from the data, instead of being applied on the data (Engward 2013, 37–38). According to the methodology, formal theories can be created from the analysis of qualitative, empirical data (Engward 2013, 37; Charmaz 2015, 402). In a typical grounded theory analysis, literature review is conducted after the data analysis (Thomson et al. 2014, 171), but due to time constraints it was done simultaneously in this study.

The goal of grounded theory is to explain a social a social process or interaction by formulating a theory from qualitative research and participants perspectives and experiences (ibid., 170). The process is characterised by continuous comparison of data analysis and coding, which takes place in three states: open coding, selective coding, and refining theoretical concepts (Engward 2013, 39). When using the grounded theory approach, the researcher can analyse data early in the process and continue working with it throughout the research cycles (Lee 2015, 756).

Grounded theory is not meant to be used as a prescriptive framework, but rather a set of flexible guidelines (Engward 2013, 38; Zhang et al. 2017, 117). In constructivist grounded theory, the researcher's awareness of their own positions is highlighted as complete avoidance of earlier knowledge is untenable (Charmaz 2015, 404). Grounded theory has been used, for example, to study the development of backpacker identity in China (Chang et al. 2017), identification to the nation by Singaporean youth (Lee 2015), and employee perceptions of the soundscape of their work environment (Acun & Yilmazer 2018).

This study uses an applied approach to grounded theory. Unlike in traditional grounded theory studies, three research questions are set. The first question seeks to examine what the texts reveal about the topic. This question is within the scope of a grounded theory research as grounded theory studies do have a topic or a special interest of which the theory is hoped to be generated. The questions “what different manifestations of hope are present in the material” and “what do they express about futures orientation” are therefore appropriate for a grounded theory study. The first research question is the only one that is positioned directly on the research material. The second research question about the hope as psychological capital will be based on the results of the first research question as well as the theoretical framework. The third research question about the instrumentalization of psychological capital in Futures Studies will combine the results of the earlier research questions as well as general discussion about the field of Futures Studies.

Because the literature review and the data analysis were done simultaneously, the research questions rose from the material and follow the logic of grounded theory, this study, too, can be considered a grounded theory study.

4 ANALYSIS

The submitted texts portrayed a variety of manifestations of hope, from the feeling of hopelessness and the futility of hopeful thinking to hope as an inherently human characteristic and a coping mechanism in life's ups and downs. Although a handful of submissions painted a rather hopeless picture or even a hostile response to the concept of hope, most of the texts (n=20) can be characterised as having a more positive than negative view on hope. What is clear from the material is that hope and its derivatives are not interpreted the same way by everyone. Rather, hope and its manifestations can be described as a prism where the reflection changes depending upon which angle one looks.

In this section I will discuss the different manifestations of hope and the image of the future they represent. First, I will examine the different ways hope is defined by the respondents. Then, the foundation of these manifestations is discussed. Following that, hope is discussed both as an active and passive mental power. Finally, I will focus on public hope and the connection of the images of the future and hope.

4.1 Defining hope

The respondents expressed diverse outlooks what significance the concept of *toivo* (hope) held for them personally. Hope as a belief in better future(s) is shared by many respondents. In such a situation, a mental image of a pleasant future—or at least a more pleasant more—is conjured, which then inspires hopeful thinking. For example:

“One believes and hopes, trusts that things will be better in the future.”¹

In this passage, hope is somewhat separated from belief and trust, although the three concepts are all present in the preferable image of the future (i.e. things will be better in the future). If compared on a continuum of certainty about the future, belief would be at the certain end (i.e. what is believed to be certain to happen) and hope at the uncertain end (i.e. what is hoped for might not happen), with trust falling between the two. However, in the next excerpt,

“When one was hopeful - - and kept believing in an ever better future.”²

¹ ”Uskotaan ja toivotaan, luotetaan siihen, että tulevaisuudessa asiat ovat paremmin.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 28. 2017.)

² ”Kun toiveikas oli - - ja jaksoi uskoa aina parempaan tulevaisuuteen.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 22. 2017.)

being hopeful and belief in a better future are equated with each other. Being hopeful means believing in the improvement in their conditions and vice versa, believing in improvement requires hopeful thinking. In other words, even whether belief in a better future is included in hope, or if the two concepts are related but separate, is under debate.

It is important to note that preferable images of the future are not always specified. They can be quite vague in character with the image not explicitly worded, like for example in “things will be better”. Images of the future in this case are more emotion-generating than pathway-specific. As short-term images of the future tend to be more elaborate than long-term ones, hopes focusing on everyday life are more specific than long-term hopes that tend to be more vague. Moreover, the detailedness of the hopeful images depend on one’s age. In the following paragraph, the respondent writes about their hopes in their childhood:

“I, too, felt hope in my mind when Christmas was approaching: ‘I wish Santa would bring me many gifts I hoped for.’ So, my hopes were very concrete. In the 1930s there was unemployment, and we were visited by beggars, but my concept of hope didn’t include concepts such as health, relatives’ employment, good relationships, or safety. I often hoped that there wouldn’t be a fire. I was allowed to be a child, hoping was allowed to be childish.”³

Here the respondent considers their childhood hopes as “childish” because they focused on concrete, material hopes such as receiving many gifts on Christmas or avoiding personal harm, like a fire. More, abstract, and impliedly more adult hopes relating to health, employment, or safety were not present in the respondent’s childhood. In their view, the concrete childhood hopes are closer to their everyday life than the more abstract hopes representing more distant worries.

Many respondents likened hoping with dreams and fantasies. The images of the future based on hopeful thinking are not seen as realistic. Hopeful thinking, then, is thought to be the entire futures thinking process, instead of being one part of it. For example:

”Daydreams are allowed and permitted, of course, but they do not have significance beyond producing pleasant relaxation.”⁴

³ ”Tunsin, että minullakin oli toivo mielessä joulun lähestyessä: ‘Kunpa pukki toisi paljon toivomiani lahjoja.’ Toiveeni olivat siis hyvin konkreettisia.

1930-luvulla oli työttömyyttä ja meillä kävi kerjäläisiä, mutta ei minulla toivo-käsitteeseen kuulunut sellaiset käsitteet kuin terveys, sukulaisten työtilanteet, hyvät ihmissuhteet tai turvallisuus. Toivoin usein, ettei tulipaloa tulisi. Sain olla lapsi, toivominen sai olla lapsellista.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 6. 2017.)

⁴ ”Päiväunet olkoot toki sallittuja ja luvallisia, muttei niillä ole muuta merkitystä kuin tuottaa miellyttävää rentoutta.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 18. 2017.)

In other words, hope in their view is unnecessary in futures thinking and serves no purpose other than hoping itself. It is *l'espoir pour l'espoir*, hope for hope. If this respondent's viewpoint is considered through the hope theory framework, hopeful thinking outlines only goals but no pathways to reach them. The respondent continues:

“They [hopes] do not become reality if you don't take action.”⁵

From this viewpoint, hope can be a negative quality where one removes themselves from reality. Hope is a passifying agent preventing the achievement of goals. This is further discussed in another text:

”It [tomorrow] won't [make things alright] if one only dreams and doesn't sometime actually do something.”⁶

In this text, the view on hope is not quite as bleak, but the respondent recognises the reparation between using active hopeful thinking and passive dreaming. Active and passive hope will be further discussed in 4.3.

When hoping is equated with dreaming and fantasising, the lack of such dreams can cause the feeling of hopelessness. In the next excerpt the respondent feels hopeless because of their lack of dreams:

“But maybe then I'm thinking of hope as a synonym for dreams. I don't know what to dream about.”⁷

Lack of dreams is a representation of the inability to conjure positive images of the future. The ability to see a change in one's conditions is the basis of generating images of the future and the pathways towards those images. Even negative images can inspire pathways—to avoid, rather than reach, the conjured image. However, the complete lack of images leads to hopelessness and the feeling of inability to control one's future. The aversion to hoping is also a method of self-preservation:

⁵ “Ne [toiveet] eivät toteudu, jollei ihminen ryhdy aktiivisiin toimenpiteisiin.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 18. 2017.)

⁶ “Mutta eihän se [huominen] tuo [asioiden järjestymistä], jos vain jää lojumaan toiveuniinsa eikä oikeasti ihan itsekin tee joskus jotakin.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 20. 2017.)

⁷ ”Mutta ehkä silloin ajattelen toivoa synonyyminä haaveille. En keksi, mistä haaveilisin.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 28. 2017.)

”Somehow, because of disappointments in childhood, I’ve mostly been hopeless in my life, downright desperate. I haven’t even had the courage to hope for anything—I’ve always been afraid that I’d be disappointed.”⁸

When hope goals are not achieved, a feeling of disappointment is generated. The respondent has experienced enough disappointments in their childhood that it is preventing hopeful thinking in adulthood lest they be disappointed again. The sentiment is similar in the saying “a pessimist is never disappointed”. Disappointment is such an intensely unpleasant feeling that the respondent does not allow themselves to generate a positive image of the future to avoid experiencing it again.

A few common themes emerge as the definition of hope. Hope and a better future are linked together. Hope is an essentially futures-oriented endeavour, and both positive and negative images of the future generate pathways towards approach and avoidance goals, respectively. Positive images, however, are needed to generate hope. Whether hope is seen as a belief in a better future, or if the two concepts are separate, is up for debate as well as whether hopeful thinking is more about emotional reaction or hope goals and pathways. In addition, hope is equated with dreams and fantasies where the lack of such goals may lead the individual to feel hopeless. What is clear is that the way hope is perceived varies from one person to another, and the concept is impossible to define in just a sentence or two.

4.2 Foundation of hope

Foundation of hope refers to the origins and supporting systems of hopeful thinking in the respondents’ lives. It is the concrete foundation upholding the hope house. These are the places where the respondents find strength and encouragement for their hopeful thinking.

The survey was conducted during *Suomi100*, the 100th year of Finnish independence. It is therefore not surprising that discussions relating to the war and the Finnish national character emerged from the texts. The Winter War, the Continuation War, and the material frugality during and following the war years in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s surfaced in many texts. The years of war were experienced from a child’s point of view. Hope was focused around surviving the war:

⁸ ”Jotenkin lapsuuden pettymysten myötä olen ollut elämässäni useimmiten toivoton, suorastaan epätoivoinen. En ole edes uskaltanut toivoa mitään - olen aina pelännyt, että kuitenkin joudun pettymään.” (SKS KRA 24. 2017.)

“We went towards challenging times on 30.11.39. The Winter War began. People’s only hope was: ‘Hope our people can survive!’ Every home hoped: ‘Hope we survive’. Gas masks were manufactured. We hoped: ‘Hope we won’t have to use them.’”⁹

In the images of the future conjured by these hopes war would not be present. Survival of both close relatives and the nation in general were at the centre of the images. As discussed in 2.2., people generally think less about the future than the present, but in this case, the images of the future conjured by the presence of war are threatening enough to be the focus of futures thinking.

What constitutes as part of the Finnish national character is related to how Finns perceive themselves. Whether hope is an inherent quality of the Finnish people or not is not agreed by the respondents:

“But the truth of the fact is that according to my own life’s experience hopefulness is not in us Finns’ blood, neither mine or anyone else’s.”¹⁰

This respondent denies hope as a national characteristic. In their perception of the Finnish people hopefulness is not a universally Finnish quality. It is important to remember that perceptions of national characteristics ought to be treated only as subjective perceptions, not representing an objective characterisation. Subjective perceptions naturally vary from one person to another. A contrasting view is therefore presented:

“There exists a culture of hope and trust in the Finnish society, despite realities.”¹¹

Here an opposite view of hope as a Finnish characteristic is explored. The respondent considers hopefulness and trustfulness to be Finnish qualities although they themselves consider it unwise (“despite realities”). Hopefulness, therefore, represents simultaneously a challenge for Finnish people and part of their heritage.

Another debate arising from the sources of hopeful thinking is whether hope is a personal trait that one is born with or a state-like characteristic that must be consciously maintained—or both. There are as many opinions as there are writers. For example:

⁹ ”Vaikeita aikoja kohti mentiin 30.11.39. Alkoi talvisota. Ainoa kansan toivo oli: ’Kunpa kansamme kestäisi!’ Jokaisessa kodissa oli toivo: ’Kunpa pysyisimme hengissä.’ Oli tehty kaasunaamareita. Toivo niiden suhteen oli: ’Kunpa niitä ei tarvittaisi.’” (SKS KRA. Toivo 6. 2017.)

¹⁰ ”Mutta totuus se vain on, että toiveikkuus ei oman elämäkokemukseni mukaan todellakaan ole meillä suomalaisilla verissä, ei minulla sen paremmin kuin kenelläkään muullakaan.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 20. 2017)

¹¹ ”Suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa vallitsee siis toivon ja luottamuksen kulttuuri, realiteeteista huolimatta.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 18. 2017.)

“Swimming upstream in one’s blood stream is something worth trying but absolutely not easy.”¹²

By ‘swimming upstream’ the respondent means doing something that does not naturally to them, in this case being hopeful. It is the same writer from earlier who does not believe that hopefulness is a Finnish national characteristic. By comparing a personal quality to a blood stream, a stable fixture, the respondent makes the statement that hopefulness—or more precisely, the lack of it—is more a trait-like quality than a flexible, state-like one. However, the way the respondent talks about swimming upstream hints that an individual may influence it. The respondent sees hopefulness as a positive element, but it is not an effortless one and needs to be worked at. Although at its core hope is in their view a trait, the effort element makes it more an action than a static quality.

A few respondents believe that rather than being a national or personal characteristic, hope is an inherently human characteristic, not unlike the ability to think or love. For example:

“Hope for the better might be a species-specific quality for human beings.”¹³

The respondent views hope as something that is present in every human being. Hope, according to this respondent, is a trait (like e.g. intelligence or inherited qualities would be according to the state–trait continuum). Although its expressions may vary, the quality is always there. The ability to use it in the formation of pathways depends on the person. For example:

“But still I’m more hopeful than cynical. I have always been a positive person, the kind who has found the ways and strength within themselves to change a situation for the better or at least make it different when I have hit a dead-end.”¹⁴

The ability to be hopeful is a quality within the respondent instead of being an action. In this excerpt the respondent considers the ability to be positive ingrained in themselves, as well as the ability to find pathways to a desired goal. Although they may have experienced adversities, their hopeful quality has allowed them to act to change the situation.

A common view was to combine the trait-like and state-like thinking. In this model, hopefulness is a human trait, but hopeful thinking must also be practiced. In other words,

¹² ”Omassa verivirrassaan vastavirtaan uiminen on kokeilemisen arvoinen temppu, mutta ei todellakaan helppo sellainen.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 20. 2017.)

¹³ ”Toivo paremmasta lienee ihmiselle lajityypillinen piirre.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 28. 2017.)

¹⁴ ”Mutta silti olen enemmän toiveikas kuin kyyninen. Olen aina ollut perusluonteeltani positiivinen ihminen, sellainen joka on kaikissa tilanteissa löytänyt itsestään keinot ja voimat muuttaa tilannetta paremmaksi tai ainakin erilaiseksi, kun olen joutunut umpikujaan.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 15. 2017.)

the ability to be hopeful is within every person, but the act of being hopeful is dependent on the person themselves. The individual has agency in their own life and can change things through their own mental actions. For example:

“A person has to have basic positivity and that positivity must be dug out, even by using force. People are capable of affecting their own thinking and how they react to things. If you think everything is bad, everything is bad.”¹⁵

“Basic positivity”, in the respondent’s view, is the ability to be hopeful, which may lie deep within a person and can be provoked even with “using force”, as the respondent humorously adds. The respondent sees people as active agents in their own perceptions of the world. This suggests that negativity, too, can be controlled and transformed. Furthermore:

“Whether you see hope in people’s lives affects your own being.”¹⁶

The ability to inspire hopeful thinking within oneself is an important quality affecting not only mental comfort but also the whole self. According to this view, if one can think hopefully, they are also more hopeful as a person. The focus, therefore, should not be how much hope there is but how that hope could be inspired.

Thus, hope is seen as something that may be strengthened and practised. It affects everyone. “But everything can’t always be bad, there is always something good¹⁷”: the way something is thought affects its reality. New opportunities and pathways arise from hopeful thinking. For example:

“Hopefulness simply gives one more opportunities than living without hope.”¹⁸

Hope inspires more pathways than hopelessness simply because hopeful thinking includes a goal towards which pathways can be created. In hopelessness no such goals exist, because the inability to imagine a positive image of the future prevents the individual from imagining an alternate situation from their present one. Without a goal to work toward, it is harder to imagine pathways.

¹⁵ ”Ihmisen pitää olla peruspositiivinen ja se myönteisyys pitää kaivaa esille, vaikka väkisin. Ihminen pysyy vaikuttamaan ajatteluunsa ja siihen, miten asioihin suhtautuu. Jos kaikki on mielestäsi huonosti, niin kaikki on huonosti.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 8. 2017.)

¹⁶ ”Näetkö toivoa ihmisten elämässä niin se vaikuttaa omaan olemiseesi.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 22. 2017.)

¹⁷ ”Mutta kaikkihan ei voi olla huonosti aina on jotakin hyvääkin.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 8. 2017.)

¹⁸ ”Toiveikkuus yksinkertaisesti antaa ihmiselle paljon enemmän mahdollisuuksia kuin vailla toivoa eläminen.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 9. 2017.)

Other people as inspirations of hope is widely discussed in the research material. People as inspirations of hope are individuals whose positivity and hopefulness inspire hope in others. In the material these are labelled as “hope idols” or “ambassadors of hope”¹⁹, but the meaning is the same. Most commonly hope idols are people close to the individual:

“During tough times the comforting words of a friend bring hope the most.”²⁰

Friends are a common inspiration for hope. When one is feeling hopeless, comforting and inspiring hope from a friend can be a significant foundation of hope. Family is also important as hope foundation:

“My Viena-Karelian father found hope in everything. I wanted to be like him. He was an optimistic person. Even adversities didn’t dishearten him.”²¹

This respondent has found hope in their father and his optimistic attitude. Although inspiring hope can be a conscious effort (e.g. comforting a hopeless friend), it does not have to be. Admiring someone who is optimistic and shares their hopefulness is enough to inspire hopeful thinking in others, too. The hope idol does not necessarily need to be a close friend or a family member, either:

“In my own life, different mentors and idols have been great supporters and helped with coping as ambassadors of hopefulness, more than anything else²².”

The mentors and idols that the respondent writes about are people they admire. An ambassador of hopefulness is a messenger of hope, its representative. However, other people are not always ambassadors of positive energy, like the next excerpt shows:

“Friends and relatives can at their best help you find hope. Sometimes they don’t understand you and then they suck your energy.”²³

¹⁹ ”toiveikkuusidoli” and ”toiveikkuuden lähettiläs” (SKS KRA. Toivo 20. 2017.)

²⁰ ”Vaikeina hetkinä ystävän lohduttavat sanat luovat toivoa kaikista eniten.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 8. 2017.)

²¹ ”Vienankarjalainen isäni löysi toivon kaikesta. Hänen kaltaisekseen halusin tulla. Hän oli valoisa ihminen. Vastoinkäymisestäkään eivät häntä lannistaneet.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 13. 2017.)

²² ”Omassa elämässäni erilaiset mentorit ja idolit ovat toimineet melkein mitään muuta paremmin oivina kannustajina ja jaksamaan auttavina toiveikkuuden lähettiläinä.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 20. 2017.)

²³ ”Ystävät ja lähipiiri voivat parhaimmillaan auttaa löytämään toivon. Joskus kyllä käy niin, että lähipiiri tai edes ystäväsi eivät tajua sinua ja tällöin he imevät sinusta energiaa.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 9. 2017.)

The respondent recognises that people close to them can inspire hope, but they can also inspire negative thinking. To be a hopeful person one ought to surround themselves with positive examples and not focus on the negative.

From these examples it is clear that communication and relationships to other people is one of the most important foundations for hopeful thinking. The research material is littered with references to other people as either inspirations or suppressors of hope. The foundation for hopeful thinking is often set already in childhood:

“The hopefulness of youth was based on that I was allowed to grow up in a safe, loving home where I was trusted and my opportunities were believed in.”²⁴

As hopeful thinking begins developing already in childhood, the family environment is especially significant in the formation of hope foundation. This respondent certainly believes so as they believe that their childhood hopefulness was due to their home environment. The situation can be reverse, too, like when this respondent was walking about their feeling of hopelessness: ”Somehow because of disappointments in childhood I’ve mostly been hopeless in my life, downright desperate.”²⁵ The childhood environment has led the respondent to feel hopeless.

However, adversities can act as a source of hope for some people. For example:

”The best hope ambassadors in my own life have been people who have endured difficult times or have not got much in life (the disabled, the mental patients, the elderly, the sick) and children.”²⁶

This respondent lists groups that have inspired hopeful thinking in them. People who have beat adversities or face more of them are listed first. The ability to overcome adversities is inspirational to the respondent because of the logic “if they can overcome it, so can I”. The ability to survive and enjoy life despite hardships instead of letting them overcome you is inspirational to the respondent because it inspires similar behaviour when one themselves faces a comparable situation.

Another theme that emerges from the source material is the desire to be a hope idol to other people. Being hopeful in their own life is not enough in these respondents’ lives, they also want to inspire hope in others. For example:

²⁴ ”Nuoruuden toiveikkuus pohjautui siihen, että olin saanut varttua turvallisessa, rakastavassa kodissa, jossa minuun luotettiin ja mahdollisuuksiini uskottiin.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 11. 2017.)

²⁵ ”Jotenkin lapsuuden pettymysten myötä olen ollut elämässäni useimmiten toivoton, suorastaan epätoivoinen.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 22. 2017.)

²⁶ ”parhaita toivon lähettäjät omassa elämässäni ovat olleet elämässä kovia kokeneet tai vähemmälle jääneet (kehitysvammaiset, mielenterveyspotilaat, vanhukset, sairaut) sekä lapset” (SKS KRA. Toivo 26. 2017.)

”I consider myself to be an extremely positive person who cheers also other people onward and sees more possibilities than forthcoming adversities in problems.”²⁷

Those who want to be hope idols consider hopeful thinking as a positive force in their lives and want other people to experience it too.

“Now I hope I can bring more hopefulness to other people and give courage to them so that they can find the resources to have the life they want to have within themselves.”²⁸

These respondents act as “hope cheerleaders” and as such, they can improve the quality of other people’s life.

Religion, more specifically the Christian faith, and the guidance of God in life’s adversities is another recurring theme in the research material. The concept of hope and religion is frequently explored through suffering and grief. For example, death and serious illness are examined as motifs for hope. The death of a child is a situation where summoning hope is especially important:

“I knew that the funeral day would be difficult. When I survive that, the next day would be easier. Now I have my own small guardian angel. He is there, behind my back. If I could see him, I could touch him. A person can survive own child’s death.”²⁹

The ability to think of their child as a guardian angel brings the respondent comfort and hope. The respondent grieves their child but still displays hopefulness: the sorrow will ease day by day. The belief in the guardian angel brings them comfort and strengthens hope for the future.

Faith in God is frequently cited as a foundation for hope. The belief that someone else will guide the future eases hopeful thinking:

²⁷ ”Itse pidän itseäni äärettömän positiivisena ihmisenä, joka tsemppaa myös muita ihmisiä eteenpäin ja näkee ongelmissa enemmän mahdollisuuksia kuin tulevia vastoin-käymisiä.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 9. 2017.)

²⁸ ”Nyt toivon voivani tuoda enemmän toiveikkuutta muille ihmisille ja antaa rohkaisua heille, että he löytävät itsestään ne voimavarat joilla saavat sen elämän jonka haluavat itselleen saada.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 9. 2017.)

²⁹ ”Tiesin, että hautajaispäivä olisi vaikea. Kun siitä selviän, seuraava päivä on jo helpompi. Nyt minulla on oma pieni suojelusenkeli. Tuolla se selän takana on, jos näkisin, voisin koskettaa. Lapsen kuolemastakin sitä ihminen voi selvitä.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 23. 2017.)

“When you have felt the wise guidance of God as the common thread during your long life, it is comfortable to think that He will also guide also today and in the future and give strength and endurance according to the day”³⁰.

The respondent considers the presence of God to be an important force in their life, both now and in the future. This is something that they do not have to doubt. By not having to doubt their faith, hopeful thinking also develops easier. Faith is therefore a significant foundation for hope for this respondent.

Religious hope for salvation might be very different from a futures-oriented hope of less celestial nature, but the two concepts are similar. In religious hope the objective of hoping is not contained only in this life but stretches to the afterlife:

“Also religion brings hope that life doesn’t end at death but continues after it.”³¹

The object of hope in this case is abstract: the afterlife cannot be described in any other way than “good” (e.g. Christian heaven) or “bad” (e.g. Christian hell).

Religious hope can represent a passive form of hope. Religious hope rests on an external figure, and the individual does not play a very active role in it—other than through prayer:

“One may pray God for help to their anxiety and fears.”³²

In religious hope, praying represents a way to affect one’s fate and a source of comfort. Religious hope represents a passive form of hoping, which will be further discussed in 4.3.

The trinity of faith, hope and love “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” 1 Corinthians 13:13) is a common motif in Christianity. Agape, the love shared by people, sets the foundation for hopeful thinking. Other people’s significance has already been discussed as ambassadors of hope, but their presence has other significance for hopeful thinking. For example:

“Who gives them faith and hope? I would save love, love for one’s fellow man.”³³

³⁰ ”Kun on kokenut punaisena lankana Jumalan viisaan johdatuksen pitkän elämänsä aikana, on turvallista ajatella Hänen johtavan myös tänään ja tulevaisuudessa ja antavan voiman ja kestäkyvyn päivien mukaan.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 26. 2017.)

³¹ ”Myös uskonto antaa toivoa, että elämä ei lopu kuolemaan vaan jatkuu sen jälkeen.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 8. 2017.)

³² ”saattaa rukoilla Jumalalta apua ahdistukseensa ja pelkoihin” (SKS KRA. Toivo 3. 2017.)

³³ ”Kuka antaa heille uskon ja toivon? Itse vastaisin rakkaus, lähimmäisenrakkaus.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 27. 2017.)

Although hope has thus far been discussed mostly from an individualistic perspective, hopeful thinking need not focus on the individual and their personal futures—even if this often is the case. Hope for oneself and hope for others does not conflict, either, and one can feel hopeless for oneself but hopeful for others, or vice versa:

“I have been a hopeful person most of my life. I’m hopeful both in everyday life and outside it, meaning festivities and thoughts about the future. - - - Finland is destroyed from the inside and one does not care about their loved ones or Finland’s fate. The values are neither humane nor emphatic. Own benefit and greed dominates. The world is fatefully close to a great destruction that has been forecasted for a long time. There is no hope for better in sight or achievable. We are at the end of the road and the human kind are walking towards their doom.”³⁴

The respondent begins this submission by writing about their personal hopefulness. However, later in the text they portray quite a cynical view of the state and the future of Finland. The respondent’s hopeful outlook on their personal life does not transmit to a hopeful outlook on the society.

Finally, there are other sources of hope. External influences support and inspire hopeful thinking in the respondents. A common external influence is art and media. For example, one respondent writes:

”Literature and movies where great friendships are highlighted help in hoping such a thing.”³⁵

Comfort and hope are found in inspiring works of art. This is not surprising as art is intended to invoke emotion in the recipient, including hope and inspiration. Meaningful activities, such as hobbies, are another source of comfort and hope. For example:

”Reading, writing, going to the cottage and work with flowers, nature in general are the lights of my life.”³⁶

³⁴ ”Olen ollut toiveikas ihminen suurimman osan elämäni. Niin toiveikas arjessa kuin arjen ulkopuolella siis juhlassa ja ajatuksissa tulevaisuutta kohden. - - - Suomea tuhotaan sisältäpäin ja ei välitetä lähimmäisistä ja Suomen kohtalosta. Arvot eivät ole inhimilliset eivät empaattiset. Oma etu ja ahneus vallitsee. Maa-ilma on kohtalokkaan lähellä suurta tuhoa, jota on ennustettu jo ajat ja iät. Toivoa paremmasta ei ole näkyvissä ja saavutettavissa. Olemme tien päässä ja ihmiskunta kulkee kohti tuhoa.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 22. 2017.)

³⁵ ”Sellaisen toivomisessa auttavat esimerkiksi kirjallisuus ja elokuvat, joissa hienot ystävyysuhteet korostuvat. Saan niistä voimaa uskoa, että minullekin käy vielä hyvin.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 15. 2017.)

³⁶ ”Lukeminen, kirjoittaminen, mökkeily kukkien kanssa puuhaillen, luonto yleensä ovat elämäni valoja.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 13. 2017.)

Meaningful content in one's life acts as a significant foundation of hope as the absence of it can instil hopelessness.

Foundation of hope refers to the premise upon which one's hopeful thinking is based. The foundation can be formed already in one's childhood, but the foundation is constructed from many pieces. The foundation forms the basic capability of hope a person possesses that is referred to in adversities. What forms the foundation varies from one individual to another. Some consider hopefulness as part of the national character, others see it as a personal characteristic. For some, it is a quality that one is born with; some view it as a state-like quality that must be maintained. Some see it as a combination of both. Hope is sought from countless sources: other people, art and culture, the society. Just like the definition of hope, the source of hope varies from one person to another.

4.3 Hope as an active and passive influence

As alluded to in the previous section, the activating and passivating hope was frequently visited in the research material. Active hope is based on the belief that one can influence their future by their own actions. Hopeful thinking, thus, encourages action to achieve a positive image of the future. For example:

“Hope is identified with activity and hopelessness with passivity.”³⁷

The underlying assumption in active hope is that hope can be controlled by the individual. A person holds a specific image of the future and the knowledge of pathways to make the image reality. Hope is treated as an action instead of a quality. One is not hopeful because hopefulness is ingrained in them, one is hopeful because they choose to be. For example:

“His life philosophy has guided me to connect maintaining hope with hard work – when you push forward no matter what, try to few new sources of excitement and never give up, you must leave at least some kind of speck of dirt to some statistic.”³⁸

The respondent's life philosophy is that through hard work everything is possible. Using hopeful thinking creates action because it motivates them.

³⁷ ”Toivo samaistuu aktiivisuuteen ja toivottomuus passiivisuuteen.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 18. 2017.)

³⁸ ”Hänen elämänfilosofiansa on ohjannut minua yhdistämään toiveikkuuden säilyttämisen ankaraan työntekoon – kun vain kaikesta huolimatta puskee eteen-päin, yrittää etsiä uusia innostuksen kohteita eikä koskaan luovuta, niin on sitä nyt edes jonkinlainen likatahra ihmisestä edes johonkin tilastoon vähän pakostikin jätävä.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 20. 2017.)

Practising hopeful thinking influences the respondents' life in a positive way. Hoping is an inherently futures-oriented exercise and influences future actions. The belief that one is an active player in their life is included in active hopefulness:

“As part of my attitude is also the belief that you can affect your own situation by your actions. I feel hopeful that by doing work I can break the ice that is holding me back from truly progressing in my life or career. Besides, there's nowhere to go from the top so it's nicer to climb towards it.”³⁹

“But ‘nothing will work, if you don't.’”⁴⁰

This is what separates thinking hope as a belief in a better future and hope as a form of dreaming. It is also the separation between hoping and active hoping. When hope is viewed as a dream, merely a vision of the future is conjured, but in active hoping also action takes place. According to hope theory hopeful thinking is not only the ability to imagine a positive image of the future but also the ability to imagine actions and to uphold motivation to reach it. “Nothing will work, if you don't”, writes the respondent, placing the responsibility of improving one's life to the individual.

Active hopefulness does not require major action plans from the individual. The pathways that are imagined by them may be small and easy to achieve. For example:

“It can be a small thing, for example going to the gym or sending a job application but to me it's an important sign that I haven't given up.”⁴¹

Hopeful thinking is practiced through small tasks. The ability to imagine pathways to an imagined goal is a key skill in active hopefulness. It should be remembered that the images of the future coupled with hopeful thinking are not necessarily clearly stated or even considered as goals. They can be very vague in character:

“You ought to start thinking positively step by step, it's worth it.”⁴²

³⁹ ”Lisäksi asenteeseeni kuuluu, että itse tekemällä voi vaikuttaa omaan tilanteeseensa. Koen toiveikkautta sen suhteen, että tekemällä työtä pystyn vielä murtamaan sen jään, joka nyt pidättelee minua pääsemästä aidosti eteenpäin elämässäni tai urallani. Sitä paitsi, huipulta ei enää pääse minnekään, joten on kivempaa kavuta sitä kohti.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 15. 2017.)

⁴⁰ ”Mutta ”nothing will work, if you don't.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 15. 2017.)

⁴¹ ”Se voi olla pieni asia, vaikka vain salilla käynti tai työhakemuksen lähettäminen, mutta minulle itselleni se on tärkeä osoitus siitä, etten ole antanut periksi.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 15. 2017.)

⁴² ”Pienin askelin kannattaa alkaa opetella ajattelemaan positiivisesti, se kannattaa” (SKS KRA. Toivo 8. 2017.)

Pathways themselves are therefore part of hopeful thinking instead of being only a route to a goal. This respondent sees the process of taking small steps already bringing improvement in one's life.

Passive hopefulness, on the other hand, is being optimistic about the future without acting to ensure it. In these situations, one trusts that the future will sort itself out. There is no motivation to be active because of the belief that the image of the future can be achieved by hoping. For example:

“I have occasionally left things undone and thrown myself too much to my dreams, trusting that tomorrow will always bring something. But it doesn't if you just remain in your dreams and don't do something for them. So, I could say that hopefulness isn't always good, at least in excess.”⁴³

The respondent acknowledges that hope can be passivating when it does not inspire action to improve one's quality of life. In passive hopefulness the objective of hoping is external from oneself, and it will solve the situation. While in active hope it is the responsibility of the individual to act in a way that their goals can be achieved, in passive hope the individual is not actively involved. One could argue that religious hope represents passive hope because the source of hope and whether the hope is realised is based on an external force, God.

Although trusting that everything will be alright is not necessarily a negative quality, its passivity is viewed in a negative fashion in the research material. Some respondents consider hope as a dream or fantasy futile:

“It's easy to list stupid and baseless hope from our times.”⁴⁴

The respondent considers hope without a plan of action to be “stupid” and without a basis in reality. Passive hope is also considered dangerous:

“Hope is a dangerous resource because it's mostly populism and simplification and despising or at least replacing realities. People can be excited to hope for almost anything that feels positive and get them actively involved.”⁴⁵

⁴³ ”Olen toisinaan jättänyt asioita tekemättä heittäytymällä liikaakin pelkkien toi-veideni varaan, luottaen että huomien tuo kyllä aina jotakin tullessaan. Mutta eihän se tuo, jos vain jää lojumaan toiveuniinsa eikä oikeasti ihan itsekin tee joskus jotakin. Siispä voisin sanoa, ettei se toiveikkuuskaan aina hyvästä ole, ainakaan liika sellainen.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 20. 2017.)

⁴⁴ ”Nykyisestä ajasta on helppo luetella tyhmää ja katteetonta toivoa.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 18.2017.)

⁴⁵ ”Toivo on vaarallinen voimavara, koska se on useimmiten tavatonta popu-lismia ja yksinkertaistamista sekä realiteettien halveksimista tai ainakin syr-jäyttämistä. Ihmiset voi innostaa toivomaan lähes mitä tahansa myönteiseltä tuntuva ja saada heidät aktiivisesti mukaan.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 18. 2017.)

The dangerous element in passive hope is that it obscures reality. The respondent considers hope in general to be passivating because it is based on an image of the future instead of what is the reality. In their view, passivating hope prevents necessary actions from taking place.

Negative attitude towards hopeful thinking also stems from the perception of it as dishonest and deceitful. For example:

”You can lie almost infinitely in the name of hope, even believe that communism pursued world peace. Hope inspires the youth and unexperienced because you can tint your world with rose and forget the boring realities.”⁴⁶

The respondent likens hope and lying—although the two concepts are not same, they see hoping involving lying. The respondent considers it especially dangerous to young people that do not have enough experience (or cynicism) to think otherwise. Positive and hopeful thinking is considered misrepresenting the reality and deceiving others. Hope is also viewed as deceiving oneself. For example:

“As a consequence, there has been accusation of dishonesty, an accusation from me to me. Is hope dishonest?”⁴⁷

The respondent sees hope as a form of dishonesty to themselves. A hopeful feeling leads to self-accusatory behaviour because it is viewed as removed from reality. Fooling oneself is seen as fooling others, as well.

Hope is presented both as an activating and passivating force in the research material. In its active form, it presents a positive image of the future towards which the inspires, but it also includes the pathways and the motivation required to execute it. In its activating form it is a positive force and a motivating element that better the quality of life. In its passive form, only a positive image is conjured without the pathways or the accompanying motivation. The respondents view passive hope in a much more negative light than active hope. Passive hope is considered dangerous because it obstructs the reality of the situation as well as being deceitful, both for other people and the individual themselves.

⁴⁶ ”toivon nimissä voi valehdella lähes rajattomasti, jopa uskoa kommunismin tavoitelleen maailman rauhaa. Toivo innostaa nuoria ja kokemattomia, koska sen nimissä voi maalailia ruusuisia asioita ja unohtaa ikävät realiteetit” (SKS KRA. Toivo 18. 2017.)

⁴⁷ ”Toki seurauksena on ollut syytös epärehellisyydestä, siis syytös minulta minulle. Onko siis toivo epärehellistä?” (SKS KRA. Toivo 28. 2017.)

4.4 Hope as a survival strategy

The significance of hope is often discussed in the context of hardships. Hopeful thinking is a strategy to deal with difficult situations and move past them. It is a survival strategy. Both internal and external hardships influence hopeful thinking. External hardships are issues like death in the family, war and scarcity, and unemployment; internal hardships are entail emotional turmoil and both mental and physical health challenges. In times of struggle the feeling of hopefulness and the feeling of hopelessness walk hand in hand. For example:

“When I had symptoms because of the mould, I felt really down. But still I had hope for the better.”⁴⁸

The respondent has suffered from mould exposure illness but uses hopeful thinking as a strategy to overcome the symptoms. Despite feeling depressed because of the illness, they expressed hope for an improvement in their conditions: “Things will be better.”

“In the beginning, I was hopeful that I would heal but now I have had to accept the reality that this will always be a part of me. I just have to learn to live with it.”⁴⁹

Hope can change its form as part of a survival strategy. In this excerpt it first took the form that the respondent would be healed from their mental illness: I hope I will be healed, but as the illness continues, hope also changes its shape. The illness is not going to disappear, so the writer has to get used to it: I hope I can live despite it. Illness is a common theme in discussions of hope and hopelessness.

Hope as a survival strategy does not only emerge in times of tangible hardship but also in times of uncertainty. In uncertain situations such as uncertainty about the future and the achievement of goals, hopeful thinking helps to cope with the stressfulness of the situation. For example:

“Will we ever have enough money to have children. Will we ever be able to get a meaningful job or to the study program of dreams where also a couple hundred others are applying. Even passion and activity aren’t always enough – if you don’t

⁴⁸ ” silloin kun oireilin homeen takia, niin mieliala oli todella maissa. Mutta silti eläin toivoa paremmasta.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 8. 2017.)

⁴⁹ ”aluksi jaksoin olla toiveikas sen suhteen, että paraisin, mutta nyt olen joutunut hyväksymään sen realiteetin, että tämä tulee aina olemaan osa minua. On vain opittava elämään sen kanssa” (SKS KRA. Toivo 21. 2017.)

have connections and be at the right place at the right time, it's impossible to succeed.”⁵⁰

The respondent lists uncertainties that a person faces in present-day Finland. They all cause stress to the individual. Hopeful thinking acts as a strategy to deal with the uncertainty of these situations.

Hopeful thinking acts as protection from hopelessness. Based on its definition alone, hopelessness is the lack of hope. In addition, hopelessness entails the lack of the positive images of the future and the inability to change one's conditions into a preferable direction. External hardships that the individual perceives as hopeless can lead to internal hopelessness, too, and to a situation where a person is afraid to hope lest they be disappointed again. For example:

“After disappointments in childhood I have mostly felt hopelessness, outright desperate in my life. I haven't dared to hope for anything – I have always been afraid of being disappointed.”⁵¹

The disappointments in the respondents' childhood occurred when their goals did not become reality. This has prevented them from forming new goals for the future in order to save themselves from the disappointment of not achieving them. However, this is also preventing them to achieve changes in their conditions. Nobody is born hopeless—hopelessness develops through disappointments and hardships throughout our lives.

One of the most important roles hope has in our lives is to act as a survival strategy to aid coping with difficult situations with the promise of a better future. Hope can take on many shapes. For some, it is hoping that the difficult situation would be altogether over; for others, it is the source of strength to cope with the situation. One could argue that hopelessness is a survival strategy, too: when hopelessness stems from the fear of disappointment that is based on earlier experiences, the opposition to hoping protects the individual from disappointment and the unpleasant feelings it brings.

⁵⁰ ”Tulemmeko koskaan olemaan tarpeeksi varoissamme hankkimaan lapsia. Tulemmeko koskaan pääsemään mielekkääseen työhön tai siihen unelmien opiskelupaikkaan, johon muutama satanen muitakin on tähtäämässä. Edes intohimo ja harrastuneisuus ei aina riitä – Jos ei ole suhteita ja ole oikeassa paikassa oikeaan aikaan, on mahdoton onnistua.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 20. 2017.)

⁵¹ ”Jotenkin lapsuuden pettymysten myötä olen ollut elämässäni useimmiten toivoton, suorastaan epätoivoinen. En ole edes uskaltanut toivoa mitään - olen aina pelännyt, että kuitenkin joudun pettymään.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 24. 2017.)

4.5 Public hope

Hope is discussed both on a private, individual level, and on a public, societal level. Public hope refers to social mood of a society and the way thinking about the future is portrayed on a societal and public levels. This includes things like political discourse, media, economics, and the general perception of how well things are going. The relationship between public mood and the individual is a circular one: the way individuals perceive the future impacts public mood. Public mood and its manifestations, on the other hand, have a significant impact how individuals feel about the future. Public mood can be perceived in a positive and negative regard, but in the research material it was mostly perceived as a negative asset. For example:

“According to a historian, public hope is dangerous and simply stupid. My claim may sound strict, but I am thinking more than anything about politics and games of power.”⁵²

This respondent considers public hope to be outright dangerous. Their negativity about public hope is mostly concentrated around how hope is used in political discourses. By guiding public opinion and hope (or rather, fears about the future), it can be used to gain public power. However, the implication of public hope in the economic sector is acknowledged:

“On the other hand, the significance of public hope in the economics is more significant.”⁵³

Public hope and its impact on the economic sector is tied to the share market and the purchase power of individuals. When the public is hopeful about the state of the economy (i.e. during an upturn of the economic cycle), they are more likely to spend more.

Although private and public hope can be examined separately, they ought not to be completely separated. For example:

”Hope is comprised of three parts, all of which are mental qualities. They are the belief and trust towards the society, the future and oneself. All of them are needed to be

⁵² ”Historiantutkijan mielestä julkinen toivo on vaarallista ja yksinkertaisesti ty-perää. Väitteeni saattaa kuulostaa jyrkältä, mutta ajattelen nimenomaan politiikkaa ja valtapelejä.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 18. 2017.)

⁵³ ”Toisaalta julkisen toivon merkitys taloudessa on merkityksellisempi.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 18. 2017.)

hopeful, and if one of them is taken away, hopeful thinking may be difficult. If two are taken away, it would be almost impossible. “⁵⁴

According to this writer, hope is the belief in three entities: self, future, and the society. To be truly hopeful, trust in both the individual’s own future and the future of their society is required because the individual is not separate from the society; individuals make the society. Trust in oneself is the basis of private, individualistic hope: I trust myself, and I believe I can achieve my goals. Trust in the society is trust in its continuity and ability to provide for the individual: I trust that I can live a good life in my society. Trust in future encompasses both the individual’s future and the society’s future. Private and public hope are, thus, intertwined.

Hope is both a private and public mental exercise. Private hope is predominantly individualistic hope, concerned with the individual’s own hopes and images of the future. Public hope is predominantly the social mood a society portrays. The two are not, however, separate entities: public hope consists of individual members of the society, and social mood has an impact on individual people’s general level of hope.

4.6 Image of the futures and hope

What is hoped represents an image of the future, i.e. a vision of what it would be like if the hope became reality. The images of the future are not necessarily refined, clearly articulated images of the future. The images can be vague (“I hope things will be better”) or very detailed. The images can concern the individual, the people around them, or the society; the images of the future expressed in the research material are centred around the individual or their close relatives. For example:

”I hoped as a child that dad would stop drinking.”⁵⁵

The image of the future enclosed in this hope is a safe home environment where their father is sober. The image of the future concerns both the respondent and their loved one.

“One good example of hope is that I have hoped for a summer cottage of my own. The hope lived for as long as about 40 years. Now I have my own cottage place.

⁵⁴ ”Toivo koostuu kolmesta osasta, jotka kaikki ovat psyykkisiä ominaisuuksia. Ne ovat usko ja luottamus yhteiskuntaan, - tulevaisuuteen ja - itseensä. Niitä kaikkia tarvitaan ollakseen toiveikas ja jos yksikin näistä kolmesta otettaisiin pois, toiveikkaasti ajattelemisen voi olla hankalaa. Jos kaksi näistä otettaisiin pois, olisi se jopa melkein mahdotonta.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 12. 2017.)

⁵⁵ ”Toivoin siis lapsena, että isä lopettaisi juomisen” (SKS KRA. Toivo 24. 2017.)

There was always something that prevented getting a place of my own. Now I hope that I would live for about ten more years. Then I could see my grandson graduate as a doctor. Of course, I should also be able to understand the situation. This is a personal wish.”⁵⁶

An image of the future can be maintained for a brief time or a very long time. In this excerpt, the respondent writes about hoping for a summer cottage of their own for forty years. Although the image most likely was not the most urgent one, it was never rejected during this time and revisited when the time was right. Another hope of theirs is to see their grandson graduate as a doctor. In this person’s case, the images of the future are very concrete: owning a summer cottage and seeing their grandson graduating. They also acknowledge that the image might not come true: “Of course I should also understand the situation. This is a personal wish”. They might not live long enough to see the image become reality or suffer from dementia and might not be able to understand it.

“At this moment I dream and hope that my life changes into one where I feel like I belong somewhere. Whether it is a work place or a study place, I would like to be part of something. A friend, maybe even a spouse, I would like to have some day.”⁵⁷

Contrary to the previous quote, in this excerpt the image of the future presented in the hopes and dreams of the respondent is rather vague: to feel like they belong. They list different ways they would like to belong (work, studying, relationships), but the hope itself is not clearly specified. It can therefore be difficult to achieve because it is difficult to see when it is achieved.

The targets of hope are not necessarily seen as images of the future; rather, hoping is seen as something inherently human—although, as we have seen, there are different opinions on this. Hope, whether one specific image or a more abstract one is always targeted towards the future. For example:

“My own future I see in a very positive light and very rich in hope. I hope that my own success and wealth grows more and more from one day to another.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ ”Yksi hyvä esimerkki toivosta on se, että olen toivonut omaa kesämökkiä. Toivo eli peräti n. 40 vuotta. Nyt minulla on oma mökkipaikka. Aina oli jotain, joka esti oman paikan saannin. Nyt toivon, että eläisin vielä n. 10 vuotta. Sitten näkisin pojanpoikani valmistumisen lääkäriksi. Tietenkin minun pitäisi myös ymmärtää tilanne. Tämä on omakohtainen toivomus.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 10. 2017.)

⁵⁷ ”Tällä hetkellä haaveilen ja toivon elämäni muuttumisesta sellaiseksi, jossa koen kuuluvani johonkin. Oli se sitten työ- tai opiskelupaikka, haluaisin olla osa jotain. Ystävän, ehkä jopa puolison, haluaisin joskus saada.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 15. 2017.)

⁵⁸ ”Oman tulevaisuuteni näen hyvin positiivisessa sävyssä ja erittäin toivorikkaana. Toivon oman menestykseni ja vaurauteni vain kasvavan päivä päivältä enemmän ja enemmän.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 9. 2017.)

Hoping is always a futures-oriented exercise. One cannot hope for the past because it cannot be changed anymore. Hoping for the past is as hindsight or regret. One cannot really hope for the present, either, because the present moment keeps moving away from our reach. Therefore, the only temporal space that can be affected is the future.

Hope as a futures exercise can be viewed differently based on how action-focused it is. As stated in section 4.1., some respondents viewed hope as a synonym for ‘dreams’—the target of it is something that is wished for and dreamt of but ultimately unconnected to the reality of life. For example:

“I have a habit of saying that you can hope the moon from the sky – one just shouldn’t think that hoping has any impact on anything.”⁵⁹

According to this view, hoping is not an action. If something is achieved, it is achieved in addition to hoping (or despite of it). In a way, images of the future and hoping are somewhat separate from one another: image of the futures is more of a plan and entail the pathways to that goal while hoping is refrained just in the act of hoping.

On the other hand, hopeful image of the futures and the essence of hope are seen as essential human characteristics. For example:

“Hope is the bearing strength of life. It is there in one’s work, nature, change, flow of time, every day and celebration, now waiting for a new spring. Hope is inseparable part of life.”⁶⁰

The respondent considers hope to be the basic foundation necessary for existing. According to this view, images of the future and hope are inseparable because hope is inseparable from the act of living. Essentially, if hope did not exist, the motivation to change circumstances would not exist, either. The impact of hope on change is further discussed in the next excerpt:

”Hopefulness is important for the functionality of societies. If we have no hope, we would abandon developing the society and give up mutual sisterhood and

⁵⁹ ”Tapani on sanoa, että kyllähän sitä toivoa sopii vaikka kuuta taivaalta - ei vain pidä mennä kuvittelemaan, että toivominen vaikuttaa yhtään mitään.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 18. 2017.)

⁶⁰ ”Toivo on elämän kantava voima. Se on mukana työssä, luonnossa, muutoksessa, ajan virtauksessa, arjessa ja juhlassa, nyt uuden kevään odotuksessa. Toivo on erottamaton osa elämää.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 14. 2017.)

brotherhood. All human and societal development is based on that we still have hope in the future and therefore should not give up yet.”⁶¹

According to this respondent, all development, be it on an individual or societal change, is dependent on hope. Without hope no change can take place. Thus, hope is not only meaningful for the individual but the society altogether. Hope is a necessary constituent and a building block in the construction of the future; the motivation behind the actions aiming for change. Its inspiration serves a key role because otherwise change cannot be achieved.

The connection between images of the future and hopeful thinking is a strong one. Hopeful thinking is an essential part of futures thinking, although some respondents did consider them separate and hope as unnecessary part of life. However, for the most part, hope is acknowledged to be an important part of making change happen. It is what individual and societal development is based on and without it and the motivational power behind it change is impossible.

⁶¹ ”Toiveisuus on asia, joka on tärkeä yhteiskuntien toiminnan kannalta. Jos meillä ei olisi toivoa, me jättäisimme yhteiskunnan kehittämisen oman onnensa nojaan ja luopuisimme keskinäisestä sisaruudesta ja veljeydestä. Kaikki ihmisen ja yhteiskuntien kehitys perustuu siihen, että meillä on vielä toivoa tulevaisuudessa, eikä sen vuoksi vielä kannata luovuttaa.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 3. 2017.)

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Manifestations of hope

The submissions did not bring many surprises from how hope has been described in academic literature. Fairly similar elements are present in both the submissions to the survey and the literature review. In the academic literature, there is no one accepted definition what hope is—considering the complex nature of hope expressed in the analysis section, this is hardly surprising. Although Snyder’s hope theory is a well-known and much cited theory, it is far from the only one, and the definitions vary from one researcher to another and from one discipline to the next. As Futures Studies is a multidisciplinary field, I did not feel necessary to limit the theoretical framework to one field and thus, the disciplines present in this study are from psychology, sociology, economics, study of organisational behaviour, nursing science—and, of course, Futures Studies. Because the theoretical framework is compiled from a range of fields, it is appropriate to begin the discussion on hope by considering the first research question, what different manifestations of hope emerged from the research material, and what exactly is ‘hope’ from the perspectives of the research material.

The purpose of conducting the hope survey at SKS was to find out what the word ‘toivo’ (hope) meant, what significance it held for the respondents, and from what sources did they find it. The key point of interest was the connection of hope and preferable images of the future. The two have a reciprocal relationship: preferable images of the future require hopeful thinking, and hope for the future requires positive images of the future as targets of hope. The relationship between images of the future and hope was replicated in the answers, as well as hope as an act of dreaming and fantasising where hope is connected to the ability to imagine positive scenarios but perceived to be somewhat removed from reality.

The two perspectives, hope as belief in a better future and hope as a form of dreaming, are essentially different perceptions of whether hope is a prerequisite for action. If hope is perceived to be a form of dreaming, the action of hoping does not necessarily even aim to make the image of the future reality, and the act of it does not therefore inspire any action. The practise of hoping is done purely for hoping itself. When hope is connected to the thought of a better future, hoping takes on an active role: conjuring positive images of the future is no longer the objective but a means of motivating action to reach the image of the future.

According to Snyder’s hope theory (2000), hope consists of three parts: goal, pathways, and agency. The theory can be applied to the process of images of the future, too. The goal is an image of the future. Like goals, images of the future vary in their time-

scale, complexity, and above all, certainty. As a goal with intermediate certainty inspires the most hopeful thought, also images of the future that are connected to what is possible inspire the most hope, as well as action. The images of the future expressed in the texts ranged from vague (“a better future”) to very specific (“I want to see my grandson graduate”). The specific images are easier to achieve because it is easier to see when the image has been fulfilled. In addition, the specific images inspire clearer pathways. In other words, when an image of the future is specific and challenging but possible, it is easier to act to reach it. The hoping process and hopefulness feed on each other: those who are higher in hope have been observed to generate more pathways to their goal and rework the pathways around possible obstacles.

Agency is the motivation behind both maintaining the goal and the pathways, and hope plays a vital role in it. For the image of the future to inspire action, hopefulness about reaching the image is necessary. Without it, motivation declines, and the image of the future becomes more difficult to achieve. If there is no chance of reaching the image of the future, it no longer classifies as an image of the future but a dream. The certainty of an image of the future affects agency, too: if an image of the future is too fantastical, it is challenging to maintain the motivation to reach it. On the other hand, too probable an image does not require the same kind of brain capacity that bigger goals do with active conjuring of pathways—reaching the goal might not require any active thought.

In other words, hope is present in all of its elements: images of the future, pathways, and motivation. The three elements support each other. Hopeful thinking is needed to conjure preferable images of the future, and preferable images inspire pathways. Both the ability to maintain an image of the future and conjure the required pathways requires motivation drawn from hope. Ben-Ze’ev argues that hope as an emotion does not involve behavioural symptoms (Ben-Ze’ev 2000, 474). As this study shows, hope is part of conjuring images of the future, and it inspires action to reach the image of the future. The pathways towards a goal thus inspire altering behaviour. When hope is thought as an image of the future, it involves behavioural symptoms. Therefore, I argue that studying hope (and the lack of it) is absolutely essential in order to understand the imagining process.

Although the focus of this study is on individual hope, the significance of public hope and their relationship ought not to be completely ignored. Like images of the future and hope, also individual and public hope are interconnected. Individual hope refers to the individual and their personal images of the future, and it most often regards their own, personal future or the futures of their loved ones. Public hope, on the other hand, refers to the social mood of a society or the collective mood of its parts. Public hope is the collective mood of hopefulness of its citizens and whether they believe that their society is heading to a positive or negative direction. Trust towards society, future and oneself

were listed as parts of hopefulness. To be a truly hopeful individual, hopeful thinking needs to extend beyond oneself to the future and the society surrounding the individual.

The foundation of hope is largely rooted in the dichotomy of hope as a personal characteristic versus hope as a human characteristic. This is connected to the discussion of whether hope is a state or trait. According to the Luthans et al. (2010) state-trait continuum, emotional qualities are categorised according to their longevity and changeability. In the continuum, states are qualities that are more difficult to change and traits qualities that are more malleable. Luthans et al. count hope as part of psychological capital (discussed further in 5.2.) and place it as a state-like construct. It is therefore more malleable than trait qualities such as fixed personalities or heritable characteristics but does not change quite as easily as pure states, like feelings.

The categorization of hope as a state was not repeated in the research material for this study, and the majority of the submissions placed hope at the trait end of the continuum. Regardless of whether hope is viewed as a characteristic typical to humans in general, to a culture or individuals themselves, it was perceived as a stable quality that does not experience a lot of change. From this perspective, hope is a trait with which humans are born. For example, when writing “People are capable of affecting their own thinking and how they react to things. If you think everything is bad, everything is bad”⁶², the respondent has approached hope as a conscious decision. One can choose to be hopeful and affect their life. This view also has the implication that being pessimistic is also a conscious choice.

Another perspective of viewing hope as a trait is that the differing levels of hopefulness are a built-in quality. In other words, some people see the glass half-full and some half-empty. A respondent wrote: “As part of my attitude is also the belief that you can affect your own situation by your actions”⁶³, i.e. the conscious effort to be hopeful is part of their own natural attitude. When hope is seen as a trait, it has the implication that its essential nature cannot be changed or at least the change will be very slow and difficult, “swimming upstream in one’s bloodstream”⁶⁴, as one respondent put it.

Hope as a personal trait (instead of a human or a cultural characteristic) is a popular view in texts where the respondents defined themselves as either hopeful or hopeless. Hopefulness or hopelessness is a descriptor of their entire personality. For example, in “I have always been a positive person, the kind who has found the ways and strength within themselves to change a situation better or at least different when I have hit a dead-end”⁶⁵ the respondent sees positivity as part of their personal character. On the other hand, when

⁶² SKS KRA. Toivo 8. 2017.

⁶³ SKS KRA. Toivo 15. 2017.

⁶⁴ SKS KRA. Toivo 20. 2017.

⁶⁵ SKS KRA. Toivo 15.2017.

writing “somehow because of disappointments in childhood I’ve mostly been hopeless in my life, downright desperate”⁶⁶, the respondent similarly see hopelessness as part of who they are but acknowledge that it has been caused by the circumstances rather than being innate. Hopefulness or the lack of it, in any case, is an underlying constituent in the creation of their personality.

Some submissions did view hope as a more state-like construct. When hope is viewed as a state, it is more fluid in nature and able to change. In this perspective, hope is viewed more as a feeling than a personality trait. For example, in “people are capable of affecting their own thinking and how they react to things”⁶⁷, the respondent sees hope as malleable and under the influence of a person’s own actions. Hope as a pure state i.e. changing as quickly and easily as emotions was not expressed in the texts, but hope requiring active thought was frequently expressed. For example, when writing “I haven’t dared to hope for anything—I have always been afraid of being disappointed”⁶⁸, they acknowledge that hopeful thinking requires courage i.e. actively making the decision to hope, despite negative experiences.

In addition to using personal, cultural, and human character as the foundation for their hopeful thinking, the so-called hope idols came up in several of the texts. Hope idols or ambassadors of hope are individuals or ideas that encourage hopeful thinking in others. These were often people close to the individual, such as family or friends, art and media, and hope mottos. Hope motivation is used to encourage the ability to hopeful thinking that lies within the individuals rather than inspire any new hope.

In summary, hope was regarded more as a trait-like quality than a state-like one, differing from the conclusion of Luthans et al. The difference between a trait-like quality and a state-like quality, however, is not a considerable one, and it could have been caused by the different perspectives of the study. After all, Luthans et al. viewed hope as part of psychological capital, alongside with optimism, self-efficacy and resilience whereas this study views hope alone, connecting it with optimism.

Hope and its activating and passivating qualities are discussed in section 4.3. When hope is viewed as an active quality, the images of the future conjured by hopeful thinking helps individuals to achieve their goals. Hope as an active effort is essentially the way hope is viewed through hope theory: goal, action, motivation, and outcome. In passive hope the goal is present but action is lacking, and therefore outcome is also left unachieved.

Pessimistic outlook, too, can have passive and active qualities, as discussed in Uschanov’s book about cultural pessimism (2015). The image of the future that is conjured in pessimistic thinking is a negative one, contrary to the positive one conjured in

⁶⁶ SKS KRA. Toivo 22. 2017.

⁶⁷ SKS KRA. Toivo 8. 2017.

⁶⁸ SKS KRA. Toivo 24. 2017.

positive thinking, and similarly to positive thinking, the reactions to the image of the future is what defines the outlook as active or passive. Passive pessimism sees the image of the future as inevitable and the individual unable to change it from happening. The image of the future is inescapable, and no action can deter it. Active pessimism, on the other hand, sees the negative image of the future as an avoidance goal and seeks to act to hinder it. Although the image of the future is the same, active pessimist sees themselves as an actor capable of affecting their fate. Similar consequences can arise from active hopefulness and active pessimism; only the target is framed differently.

Based on the preceding discussion, it is important to define hope as it will be understood in the rest of this study and how it can be understood from a Futures Studies perspective. First, hope is connected to positive images of the future. Hope is required in conjuring the image of the futures, maintaining them, and inspiring pathways to make them reality. Second, hope is a trait. It is a fairly static fixture but not completely resistant to change. Third, there are individual differences in hopeful thinking. Finally, action is involved in hopeful thinking.

To summarise, the definition of hope used in this study is as follows:

Hope is a trait-like construct in which a positive image of the future is conjured and maintained through the belief that the image can become reality through the actions of the individual. The tendency for optimistic thinking is both a trait quality and subject to conscious behaviour.

5.2 Hope as psychological capital

Psychological capital (Luthans et al. 2015) is the human and social capital that a person holds. It is based on the capabilities and abilities an individual has rather than physically tangible objects. It includes both current and future capabilities, making it an essentially futures-oriented endeavour. Luthans et al.'s psychological capital consists of hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience (depicted in figure 3). In this section, I will present a

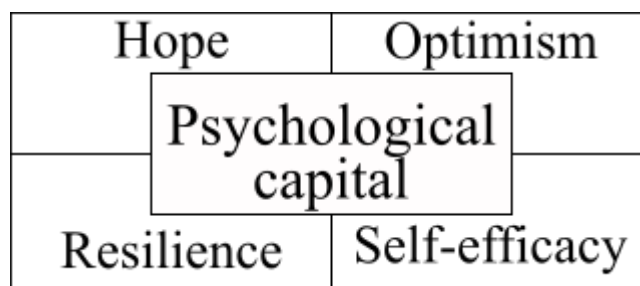


Figure 3. The elements of psychological capital (Luthans et al. 2010)

modified version of the psychological capital framework, focusing on hope and optimism, with application to the use of Futures Studies. This applied framework is called hope capital.

Like other types of capital (economic capital, human capital, cultural capital), hope capital refers to the resources an individual has at their disposal. The difference is that unlike economic and social capital that include what the individual has now, hope capital concerns resources both in the present and the future. After all, hope is an innately futures-oriented resource. In other words, the hope capital framework is a futures-oriented one.

To understand hope capital, we need to discuss the different elements involved in its creation. Hope consists of personality traits, hopeful thinking, the ability to conjure pathways, and futures-orientation. Personality traits are somewhat rigid characteristics. They are the tendencies that individuals exhibit naturally. Optimism and pessimism are examples of personality traits relevant to hope capital. From the research material it was clear that the respondents considered hopefulness and optimism as characteristics that are established in childhood and then carried into adulthood. For example, the excerpts

“I am a hopeful person. Maybe it has always been a part of me, ever since childhood.”⁶⁹

and

“I believe that hopefulness is my basic characteristic, I have after all been hopeful for almost my entire life.”⁷⁰

represent hopefulness that has been present in their life from childhood. In psychological capital, optimism and hope are listed as separate entities, but I argue that the two are fundamentally connected and share a more causal relationship than for example hope and resilience, or optimism and self-efficacy. How static optimism is as a personality trait is a topic for further research, but I argue that it varies depending on life situation. For the purpose of this study, I will treat it as a stationary trait.

Although optimism and hope are very closely related and are used interchangeably in the research material, they are distinct concepts. As discussed above, optimism (or pessimism) is a personality trait. Hopeful thinking, on the other hand, is an activity. In colloquial language optimism might be discussed as a decisive action (“think more positively”), but I would separate the two concepts in the following way: optimism is the

⁶⁹ “Minä olen toiveikas ihminen. Ehkä se on ollut osa minua aina, lapsuudesta.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 23. 2017.)

⁷⁰ ”Uskon olevani perusluonteeltani toiveikas , olenhan ollut toiveikas melkein koko elämäni ajan.” (SKS KRA. Toivo 22. 2017.)

tendency to see things in a positive light whereas hopeful thinking is the conscious act. There is certainly a causal relationship between the two as an optimist finds it easier to practice hopeful thinking, but hopeful thinking is not practiced only by optimists.

The relationship between pessimism and hopelessness is not as clear. If pessimism is thought as the antithesis of optimism, it could be described as the tendency to see things in a negative light. If hopelessness is seen as the other side of hopefulness, it would be the lack of conscious hopeful thinking. However, as discussed, pessimism too can be active, so its consequence is not necessarily hopelessness. The tendency to think pessimistically can lead to action in the same way as thinking optimistically; the goals are merely framed differently. I argue that the antithesis of hopeful thinking is not hopelessness but the inability to act, which then leads to feeling hopeless.

Hopeful thinking has already been discussed at length but to reiterate, hopeful thinking is a separate entity from the personality trait of optimism. The two are connected and an optimistic person is likely to practice hopeful thinking with more ease, but a pessimist can also experience hope. Hopeful thinking is a matter of conscious action and at its core it is the belief that one can make a difference. If this belief is removed, even the most optimistic person feels hopeless.

In Snyder's hope theory the ability to conjure pathways is included in the definition of hope, alongside goals and motivation. However, I have separated the two in hope capital. Firstly, for the purpose of this study, Snyder's hope theory alone is not a sufficient theoretical framework. Secondly, it is important to acknowledge that pathway thinking is not a direct consequence of hopeful thinking. One might have the ability to conjure preferable images of the future but does not feel necessary to imagine actions, i.e. passive form of hope.

Thus, pathway thinking is listed separate from hopeful thinking. The ability to imagine routes to reach a goal is an important part of hope capital. Even if someone is optimistic and practices hopeful thinking with ease, it is the ability to imagine pathways and to follow them that make the images of the future reality. Although hopeful thinking alone has benefits, for example better performance in academics and sports, it is the pathway thinking that makes hope capital a truly beneficial resource to have. Those who are able to imagine different pathways towards a goal and to recalculate their routes when facing an obstacle have the ability to make their preferable futures a reality.

Finally, the last component of hope capital is orientation to the future. It should be noted that none of the categories of hope capital are isolated. All the components overlap with each other. For instance, futures-orientation is involved in imagining preferable images of the future and is an integral part of pathway thinking. However, it is good to devote time to consider futures-orientation as a separate entity, too, as it is such an integral part of the other resources.

Constantly evaluating the future paths and the ability to see different futures is at the centre of futures orientation. As Masini's third principle of the multiplicity of futures, no one possible future exists, but the future is created through personal values and choices (Masini 1993, 9). The ability to imagine one's future as paths of opportunities allows creativity to flourish and new images of the future to be constantly imagined and recalculated to fit one's values and wishes.

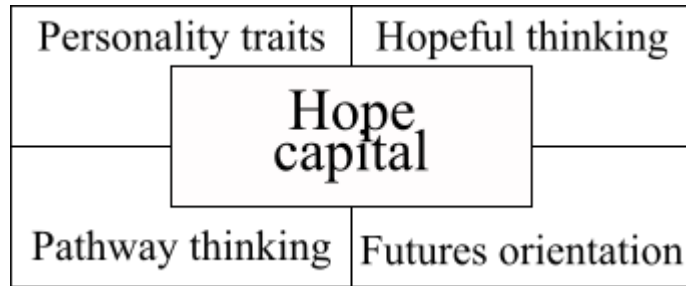


Figure 4. The components of hope capital.

To summarise, hope capital consists of personality traits, hopeful thinking, pathway thinking, and futures orientation (depicted in figure 4). Having high hope capital allows the individual to plan their future more ambitiously and to reach those goals, too. The foundations of hopeful thinking give us some ideas how hope capital is accumulated. Some of it is innate, some of it must be learnt. Some of it is accumulated in a familial or cultural environment. The importance of other people as ambassadors of hope rose again and again in the research material. Some of it is influenced by past experiences, both successes and failures.

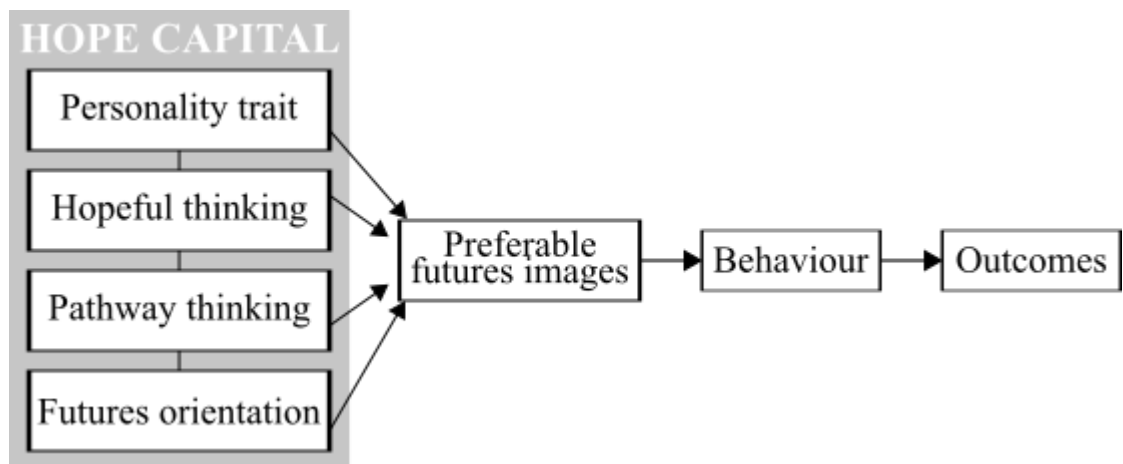


Figure 5. The hope capital model, applied from Loewenstein et al. (2001), Snyder's Hope Theory (2000) and Luthans et al.'s psychological capital (2015)

The hope process is depicted in figure 5. This model is applied from Loewenstein's risk-as-feelings framework (2001, see the original model on page 11), Snyder's hope theory (2000), and Luthans et al.'s psychological capital (2015). In this applied model, anticipated outcomes, subjective qualities, and other factors are replaced by the components of hope capital. Cognitive evaluation and feelings are replaced by preferable images of the future. Preferable images of the future are affected by the different components of hope capital (the different components also affect each other). It is not a consecutive process as images of the future are present in the components themselves. I propose that since the images of the future affect behaviour and consequently outcomes, hope capital is essential when one wants to affect the outcome. However, how hope capital affects the outcome requires more study and is not within the scope of this one. This study focuses on understanding the underlying motivation and reasoning behind images of the future.

The different aspects of hope capital overlap, as discussed earlier, and it can be difficult to precisely categorise the components. It is not a quantifiable tool and not intended to be used to assign a quantity to one's hope capital. The hope capital model is a tool meant for discussing hope from the perspective of Futures Studies. In the following paragraphs I will discuss how different aspects of hope capital affect the image of the futures produced.

The tendency to see the world in a certain way is engrained in personality traits. Personality traits and the worldviews are embedded in our public consciousness. As in the old anecdote where optimist sees the glass half full and pessimist sees it half empty, oversimplifying the tendencies has the optimist seeing their future as positive and the pessimist seeing it as negative. Anecdotes aside, the personality traits do have an impact on the kind of futures that are imagined. Those with an optimistic personality are more likely to see the future in positive approach goals while those with a pessimistic personality, on the other hand, are more likely to see their future in negative avoidance goals. Personality trait therefore has an impact on the kind of images that are produced.

Hopeful thinking, on the other hand, is a conscious effort of imagining positive images of the future. The ability to do hopeful thinking has an impact on not only the content of the images produced but also maintaining those images. Hopeful thinking is essential in motivating the conjuring of the image in the first place, but also providing motivation on the way to the goal. Those with the ability to think hopefully can face possible obstacles on the way and pursuit the goal despite them.

Pathways are necessary components needed to reach the image of the future. The different actions one might take to reach the goal and especially recalculating one's paths when facing obstacles impacts on how successful an individual's goals are. Pathway thinking itself is affected by hopeful thinking as high hope individuals can imagine several routes to a goal.

The connection between images of the future and futures orientation is a clear one. A person's orientation to the future impacts the scale of images of the future they are able

to imagine as well as the multiplicity of possible futures. A futures-oriented person is likely to have more ambitious images of the future on a longer time scale. They are also more likely to take the future into account in their daily lives.

Thus, I argue that the different elements in hope capital are what creates differences in images of the future and the ability to reach them. The images of the future of a person who has high hope capital are on a longer time scale, involve multiple pathways and are easier to maintain. Low hope capital, on the other hand, hinders the ability to conjure images of the future and the ability to reach one's goals. Low hope capital might also mean that the images of the future are on a shorter time scale.

Images of the future and goals as terms have been thus far used interchangeably. In this study I have used images of the future as a type of goal and considered producing images of the future as systematic, planful behaviour. However, while goals are conscious, images of the future may not be. They can be unconscious, and even the action the images inspire can be unaware of the image of the future. Images of the future also can be vague, as can the connection between the images and the pathways they inspire. The focus of this study is on conscious images of the future and from that perspective, images of the future as goals can be on a larger scale than other types of goals.

Hope capital has thus far been discussed mostly from an optimistic point of view. However, the intention of the hope capital model is not to describe optimism as good and pessimism as bad. As discussed earlier, the consequence of pessimism is not hopelessness but different pathways to differently framed images of the future. Pessimism might inspire more action than optimism if the avoidance goal is strong enough.

Images of the future dictate the direction we aspire to and the actions we take. It is therefore important to understand what influences images of the future because it helps us to understand images of the future and the influence they have on our world. I have presented the hope capital model as one way of understanding the components influencing images of the future: personality traits, hopeful thinking, pathway thinking, and futures orientation. In the following section I will discuss the merit hope capital has in the field of Futures Studies.

5.3 Hope capital in Futures Studies

Hope as a resource is an inherent part of futures thinking, yet it has been largely ignored in Futures Studies. The study of futures has been focusing on the different kinds of images of the future and describing them without exploring the motivation behind the images. The focus of this study is on preferable images of the future (rather than possible or probable futures) because that is what hope is at its core, what we want to happen, not what is possible or likely.

Images of the future do not provide much insight if we do not understand the motivation behind them. Understanding their motivation would help futurists to inspire them. Hope is an essential ingredient in solving humanity's biggest challenges. Inspiring hope about the future and empowering people about their own futures should be the most important tasks of futurists.

Preferable images of the future tell us what we want to happen. Their antonym, undesirable images of the future, on the other hand, tell us what we want to avoid. Essentially, images of the future are a matter of approach and avoidance goals. I believe that positive images of the future are more inspirational than negative ones (for example "I want to eat healthier" versus "I must stop eating sweets").

The main thesis of this study is that hope is a valuable asset in Futures Studies and can be used to inspire action. In the following paragraphs I will examine few of the underlying assumptions present in this study. The first assumption is that positive images of the future are preferable to negative images of the future. It has been studied that approach goals are easier to accomplish than avoidance goals because of the limited nature of self-control. Any goal framed in a negative way is going to be more challenging to achieve because the mere thought of the goal does not produce positive emotions as a goal framed in a positive fashion might. In other words, positive images of the future are preferable because they are easier to achieve. Guilt is not a good motivator.

The second assumption is that high hope capital is preferable to low hope capital because hope capital has benefits for the individual. Not only does hope have health benefits, both physical and mental, it makes life more enjoyable when there is something to look forward. Hope capital also allows the person to produce images of the future more proficiently and to maintain the goals. A person with low hope capital is able to conjure image of the futures, but they might be framed in a negative way and abandoned when faced with obstacles.

The third assumption is that high hope capital influences images of the future to be more positive. As established, positive images of the future are preferable because they are easier to achieve. High hope capital allows for the images of the future to be maintained, too.

Thus, the central argument is that high hope capital ought to be appreciated and supported. The purpose of images of the future in Futures Studies is to empower people to become active players in their own futures. By supporting high hope capital, we can further empower the creation of the images of the future.

As hope capital includes both present and future capabilities, it is very relevant to Futures Studies. Hope is an essentially futures-oriented endeavour as it is always targeted towards the future. After all, future is the only temporal space one can affect. This study has focused on hope capital as a present quality, but it entails both present and future

capabilities which raises the question of how hope capital and its component could be trained. This is a topic for further study.

Thus, hope capital is an important resource for Futures Studies. It helps creating images of the future that are empowering, on a longer time scale and made reality by the pathways it inspires. Inspiring high hope capital and researching how it is created and maintained should be one of the key tasks of futurists.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Summary of key results

This thesis set out to discuss the significance of hope in the context of Futures Studies. Hope, despite being a familiar concept to everyone, is not easy to define. Using the SKS hope survey as research material, a grounded theory study of the different manifestations of hope was conducted. The theoretical framework was formed of three main theories: Rubin's (1998a) images of the future, Snyder's (2000) hope theory, and Luthans et al.'s (2015) psychological capital, which were adopted into a new model: hope capital.

Hope is a deeply personal construct, and its origins are many; some respondents view it as an innate quality, some as formed in childhood. Some see it entirely action-based. There are as many definitions of hope as there are people, but some similarities can be discovered. Based on the manifestations of hope expressed in the research material, a definition for the use of Futures Studies was constructed:

Hope is a trait-like construct in which a positive image of the future is conjured and maintained through the belief that the image can become reality through the actions of the individual. The tendency for optimistic thinking is both a trait quality and subject to conscious behaviour.

Hope and futures thinking are inherently connected to each other. Hope can only be targeted to the future because the future is the only temporal space we can affect. Hope represents preferable futures images, but in order to make them reality, also pathways and motivation are required. The ability to maintain images of the future and imagine pathways requires hope-based motivation. Hope inspires action to reach the image of the future, and therefore understanding it is necessary. If we understand how hope acts as a motivator, we can seek to inspire it and be better equipped to face global challenges.

The hope theory model was created from three different theories: images of the future, hope theory, and psychological capital. Psychological capital depicts current and future capabilities that an individual has, and it consists of hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience. However, for this study, psychological capital alone was not sufficient in describing the motivational power of hope. Hope was therefore focused as the main quality of psychological capital. Its definition was borrowed from hope capital where goal was change into images of the future; hope consists of preferable futures images, pathways towards it, and the agency required to maintain it.

Hope capital consists of personality traits, hopeful thinking, pathway thinking, and futures orientation. High hope capital is beneficial: it allows the individual to plan their

future more ambitiously and to reach those goals. High hope capital alone has benefits, e.g. higher performance in academics and sports, but the capability to conjure futures images, imagine pathways towards the images, and the motivation to maintain them makes hope capital a beneficial quality to have.

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of hope in the field of Futures Studies. As already stated, hope is an inherently futures-oriented endeavour. Hope capital can and ought to be instrumentalized in the study of Futures Studies. It helps to create and understand preferable images of the future and empower people in the construction of their own futures. Preferable images of the future are preferable to negative images because avoidance goals are more difficult to maintain than approach goals. High hope capital is also preferable to low hope capital not only because of the benefits high hope capital alone has but because high hope capital people achieve their images of the future with more ease. High hope capital inspires preferable futures images.

6.2 Methodological qualities and further study

This study is a qualitative grounded theory study. The literature review and analysis of the manifestations of hope and what they revealed about futures orientation were done simultaneously to allow the answers to rise from the research material instead of imposing hypotheses on the material. The research questions about hope capital and its instrumentalization in Futures Studies were based on both the academic literature and the answers from the analysis section. The objective of grounded theory study is the creation of new theory, and this was achieved with the hope capital model.

The nature of the research material imposes the methodological qualities of this study, largely what is possible to gain from the material and how it can be analysed. The respondents were free to write on the topic as they pleased, and only guiding questions were provided. The goal was to analyse how people understand hope and what role it plays in their life, and for this, the research material was suitable. The answers represent what the respondents subjectively feel about hope and should not be taken as objective descriptions of hope, and I argue that because hope is such a subjective, emotional experience, studying it objectively is almost impossible. The topic of this study is the meanings people give to hope, not hope as an objective concept.

This study has been a step into studying hope in the context of Futures Studies, but further study is needed. Especially the role of hopeful thinking on outcomes requires more study. I believe that preferable futures images are easier to achieve than negative ones, and approach goals have been studied to be more attainable than avoidance ones, but further study is required in the context of Futures Studies. Another topic for further study is if and how hope capital can be trained. Research suggests that psychological capital

can be trained so applying that suggests that hope capital can also be trained. However, more study on this is needed.

6.3 Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to study hope in Futures Studies context: what is meant by hope, and if it can be instrumentalized as a tool for futurists. There are as many meanings to hope as there are people, but there are some general characteristics that describe hope. It is a process in which a positive image of the future is conjured and maintained through the belief it can become reality. Using images of the future, hope theory, and psychological capital as a basis, a new hope capital model was created to ease discussion of hope in Futures Studies. Hope capital includes personality traits, optimism, pathway thinking, and futures orientation. The tool eases the instrumentalization of hope in Futures Studies. Martin Luther said, “Everything that is done in the world is done by hope”, and hope is how we face the world’s greatest challenges.

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APPENDIX: SURVEY BROCHURE



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TOIVO ARJESSA

MUISTITIETOKERUU 1.4.–31.8.2017

Elämme vaikeita aikoja. Maailmanpolitiikan jännitteet, heikentynyt taloustilanne, lisääntynyt eriarvoisuus ja nousevat äärioliikkeet herättävät keskustelua. Niiden luoma ilmapiiri vaikuttaa uskoomme tulevaisuudesta, toiveisiimme, toivoomme ja toivottomuuteemme. Toivo ja toiveikkaus suuntaavat tulevaan. Niiden merkitys arjen teoissa korostuu aina tällaisina aikoina.

Keräämme muistoja, näkökantoja ja odotuksia toivosta. Kerro, mitä toivo merkitsee juuri sinulle. Mitä toivo on tällä hetkellä? Mitä muistoja sinulla on toivosta?

Ideoita ja innostusta voit hakea seuraavista aiheista:

- **Kerro suhtautumisestasi toivoon.**
Oletko toiveikas ihminen? Miksi? Miten toiveikkaus näkyy elämässäsi? Miten toivo vaikuttaa toimissasi? Oletko ollut toiveikas tai toivoton etenkin jossain elämänvaiheessa? Kerro tällaisesta tilanteesta. Miten toivo on ollut osana tilanteissa, joissa et ole tiennyt mitä tulee tapahtumaan? Miten toivo vaikutti tekemiisi päätöksiin? Mitä toivoit? Mitä nyt toivot?
- **Mitä sinulle tulee mieleen sanasta 'toiveikkaus'?**
Entä sanasta 'toivottomuus'?
- **Mistä toivo on elämäsi aikana kummunnut?**
Miten lähipiirisi (esimerkiksi ystävät ja perhe) vaikuttavat omaan toiveikkuuteesi? Oletko luontaisesti toiveikas ihminen vai täytyykö sinun tehdä sen eteen työtä? Miten yhteiskunnallinen tilanne vaikuttaa toiveikkuuteesi tai toivottomuuteesi? Näetkö ympärilläsi toiveikkuutta? Mitkä asiat tukevat toiveikkuutta? Onko toiveikkaus toivottavaa? Miksi?
- **Koetko oman tulevaisuutesi toiveikkaana?**
Miten suhtautumisesi tulevaisuuteen on vaihdellut elämäntilanteen mukaan? Millaisia kokemuksia sinulla on tilanteista, joissa toivon merkitys on korostunut? Kuvaile kokemuksiasi.

Henna Heinäjärvi käyttää aineistoa pro gradu -työhönsä Turun yliopistossa tulevaisuudentutkimuksen kansainvälisessä maisteriohjelmassa.

Tiedotamme keruun tuloksista syksyllä 2017. Arvomme kaikkien osallistuneiden kesken kirjapalkintoja.

VASTAUSOHJEET

Kirjoita omalla kielelläsi ja tyylilläsi. Tekstien pituutta ei ole rajoitettu. Kirjoita vastaukseesi suostumukseksi siihen, että lähettämäsi aineisto arkistoidaan nimellä tai nimimerkillä SKS:n arkistoon.

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