

Hope Examined Through a Developmental Stage Perspective

A Doctoral Dissertation Research Proposal

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Hope seems to be a human function or process that can be catalyzed when facing limitations and uncertainty that separate us from reaching personally significant goals. The contexts vary, for example: being ill and trying to live until one's daughter finishes high school; striving to complete college while raising three children and working two jobs; or struggling to find housing when one's Pacific Island village becomes permanently uninhabitable due to rising seas.

Scholars and laypersons are naming hope as an essential element for dealing with the world's complexities that threaten our very existence. In the last 30 years, hope has been researched across many academic disciplines with most scholars identifying that hope can be learned and facilitated. Much of the hope research in the fields of psychology, palliative care, education, and sustainability is targeted toward identifying effective interventions to assist individuals with well-hoping. *Well-hoping* refers to the pragmatic ways which individuals may best utilize the power or function of hoping. Those scholars and practitioners whose work facilitates well-hoping in individuals and collectives are identified as *hope interventionists*. Hope interventionists include educators, coaches, facilitators, therapists, group leaders, and social activists.

Hope scholars are calling for research to identify the most effective interventions to support individuals to develop capacities related to well-hoping. Identifying individual differences in hoping is another research target. Hope is recognized as a meaning making function that is catalyzed when limitations arise. Currently, research on meaning-making and hope is sought. Since the STAGEs theory and model are based on identifying and working with distinctions in individuals' meaning making systems, there is value in examining hope through a developmental stage perspective.

The question for Lisa Buckley's doctoral research is: *How do adults within distinct developmental stages perceive and experience hope?* The research methodology includes development and use of a stage assessment tool based on O'Fallon's (2012, 2013, 2018, 2019) STAGEs assessment model, methodology, and assessment instrument. In addition to developing

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and applying this STAGES Hope Specialty Protocol, qualitative interviews of study participants will also be conducted.

The research methodology includes distributing the hope specialty protocol to four individuals who have previously scored in each of the following six stages: Achiever 3.5 through Universal 6.0. With four respondents in each of the stages, there will be a sample sufficient for the Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency measure of reliability for the Hope specialty protocol. At a minimum, two from each developmental stage will be interviewed.

Anticipated date for completing the research is late 2020.