The Role of Hope in Promoting Society-Oriented Future Goal

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Abstract It is important to provide students with resources to achieve not only their future personal goals, but also those that are intended to contribute to the society. The study investigated the role of internal and external locus-of-hope dimensions in promoting society-oriented future goal in a sample of college students. Survey questionnaires were administered to 528 college students selected through convenience sampling in order to measure the study variables. Results of regression analysis revealed external locus-of-hope dimensions (i.e., family, peers, and spirituality), but not internal locus-of-hope, as predictors of society-oriented future goal. These findings underscore the important role played by family, peers, and spirituality in promoting students' future aspirations to help and contribute to the society with education as one prospective pathway.

Keywords: college students, locus-of-hope, society-oriented future goal

Introduction

Students who are motivated are more likely to do well in school. This assertion is grounded on various motivational theories

and frameworks, which provide explanations on how and why students become more motivated in their academic experiences. Hence, a pathway to facilitate the learning and achievement of students in the classroom and school is through various motivational mechanisms like students' personal goals (e.g. achievement goals, social goals, future goals) and self-related beliefs (e.g. self-concept, self-efficacy, perceived control). In particular, recent studies on the academic achievement and other important academic outcomes of Filipino students have provided support to the role played by socially-oriented motivational pathways like perceived legitimacy of parental control (Bernardo, 2012), social relations (King & Ganotice, 2013), and external locus-of-hope (Bernardo, Salanga, Khan, & Yeung, 2016). In general, the findings of these studies provide evidence for the adaptive role of more socially-oriented motivation in a number of educational outcomes. Therefore, the present study intends to examine two socially-oriented motivational pathways hypothesized to have a role in learners' academic experiences: locus-of-hope and future goals. More specifically, the study focuses on investigating the link between locus-of-hope and society-oriented future goal. Whereas it is important to build students' character strengths that they could use to become successful in achieving their personal goals, it is likewise crucial to develop in them values and social awareness to become productive members of the society. As such, it is imperative to encourage them to include in their future aspirations the desire to be able to make valuable contributions to the society. In this study, we look at how one's hope, especially that which involves external agents such as family, peers, and spirituality, can contribute to increasing society-oriented future goal.

Society-Oriented Future Goal

Future goals are distal goals that individuals may hold for their futures and the content of future goals is regarded as

cognitive representation of what a person seeks to achieve in one's future (Lee, McInerney, Liem, & Ortiga, 2010). Viewing one's goals from a future perspective plays an important role in guiding an individual's present actions. For instance, future goals facilitate the development of short-term goals that bridge the present with the future. By seeing the connection between one's present actions and future outcomes, a person may become more engaged in what he or she is currently doing, and thus, may find more meaning in it (McInerney, 2004; Miller & Brickman, 2004). Future goals, especially when intrinsically motivated (e.g., self-acceptance, affiliation, community feeling, and physical health), have been found to have adaptive functions. It may increase students' engagement, information processing, and persistence, as well as their academic performance (Lee et al., 2010). Being able to link one's future goals with present tasks may also increase an individual's motivation and persistence to learn (Simons, Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Lacante, 2004).

Five types of future goals that are relevant to students have been identified: (1) fame-oriented; (2) wealth-oriented; (3) career-oriented; (4) family-oriented; and (5) society-oriented (Lee et al., 2010). In this study, we are particularly interested in society-oriented future goal. Society-oriented future goal pertains to goal that is directed toward being able to contribute to, help, and develop the society. It is about being able to make an impact on the society in the future (Lee et al., 2010). Since society-oriented future goal is intrinsically motivated and altruistic in nature, there is evidence that associates it with deep, meaningful learning (Lee et al., 2010; Wilding & Andrews, 2006), and psychological adjustment (Sheldon, Ryan, Deci, & Kasser, 2004). Thus, examining students' society-oriented future goal is important. Considering the link between future goals and present actions, strengthening students' society-oriented future goal could be helpful in encouraging them to engage and find meaning in learning and doing prosocial and altruistic behaviors that are beneficial to the society. Hence, it is worth looking at

factors that could possibly increase society-oriented future goal among college students. We propose that locus-of-hope could predict college students' society-oriented future goal.

Locus-of-Hope

Hope is a character strength construct in positive psychology that pertains to positive cognitions regarding a person's expectations and capacities in attaining important goals (Snyder, 2002). It consists of two types of cognitions: that regarding expectations and ability to conceptualize goals clearly and search for strategies to achieve those goals (i.e., pathway thinking); and finding and maintaining the motivation and capacity to follow through those strategies (i.e., agency thinking). Both these components must be present in order for one to maintain successful goal pursuits (Snyder, 1994). This conceptualization of hope was later elaborated such that pathways and agency are not only self-determined, but may involve externally-generated pathways and agency as well (i.e., internal and external locus-of-hope). In the internal locus-of hope, it is the individual that serves as the agent of goal-attainment cognitions. On the other hand, external locus-of-hope involves external agents, such as family, peers, and spiritual beings (Bernardo, 2010).

Internal locus-of-hope has been found to be related to individualism constructs such as competitiveness and responsibility; while external locus-of-hope was associated with collectivism constructs. External-family and external-peer locus of hope dimensions were both linked with advice, and external-spiritual locus-of-hope, with harmony (Bernardo, 2010). Relationships between social axioms, or beliefs about the social world, and hope have also been found. Internal, external-family, and external-peer locus-of-hope dimensions were found to be associated with reward for application; external-spiritual locus of hope with fate control and religiosity; and internal locus-of-hope was negatively related with social cynicism (Bernardo

& Nalipay, 2016). In the academic domain, there is evidence that both internal and external loci-of-hope are associated with specific learning strategies (Bernardo et al., 2016).

Given the important role hope plays in goal attainment, we hypothesize that hope would be associated with society-oriented future goal. Moreover, since external locus-of-hope is associated with collectivism, a construct in which society or group interests take precedence over individual interests, we postulate that external locus-of-hope would predict society-oriented future goal more strongly than internal locus-of hope.

The Present Study

The aim of the present study is to examine the predictive relationship between locus-of-hope and society-oriented future goal among college students. While there is available literature that supports the relationship between hope and future goals (e.g., Magyar-Moe, 2013), this study aims to contribute to the existing literature by elaborating this relationship further by looking at how various locus-of-hope dimensions (i.e., internal, external-family, external-peer, external-spiritual) would predict a specific future goal (i.e., society-oriented future goal). Although the hypotheses that hope is associated with society-oriented future goal; and that external locus-of-hope predicts society-oriented future goal more strongly than internal locus-of-hope have not been directly tested before, there is ample evidence that supports the idea.

Since society-oriented future goal involves not only the individual, but other members of the society as well, it can be construed to reflect interpersonally-defined goals, intentions, and/or preferences, emphasizing the interdependence of individuals, and the person's position in the social situation. As such, a conjoint model of agency (Markus & Kitayama, 2003) that takes into consideration the role of significant others in agency and action would be more applicable for the attainment

of society-oriented future goal. Literature also shows the role of family, peers, and spirituality in promoting prosocial behaviors and goals. For instance, it was found that cultural value systems that promote familism encourage prosocial behaviors among adolescents (Knight, Carlo, Basilio, & Jacobson, 2015). External support, such as that coming from parents, have likewise been found to have an impact on the development of adolescents' sense of purpose and pathways to support their purpose to pursue their goals (Malin, Reilly, Quinn, & Moran, 2013). In addition, peers have been found to be influential in students' social goals, such as being prosocial and responsible (Wentzel, Baker, & Russell, 2012); and religiosity and spirituality were found to be associated with prosocial behaviors (Li & Chow, 2015). These findings converge to the idea that external agents, such as family, peers, and spirituality play an important role in the pursuit of social goals.

By looking at how the different locus-of-hope dimensions predict society-oriented future goal, this study could provide valuable information that can be used in designing interventions to encourage college students to include contributing and helping in the society among their future aspirations. This study can also inform of the important roles played by the students' significant others (i.e., family and peers) and spirituality in finding meaning in their current engagement with prosocial behaviors as they seek toward achieving society-oriented future goal. This study is crucial as there is now a movement in education that aims not only to prepare students to become successful in their future careers, but also to become agents of change in the society. Indeed, much emphasis is now being given on strengthening universities' and colleges' role in being able to contribute to the community and to the society at large, in addition to their other basic functions of delivering instruction and research production.

Methodology

Participants and data gathering procedures

The participants of the study are composed of 528 college students currently enrolled in tertiary education from various state colleges and universities in Manila and Cavite recruited through convenience sampling. The average age of the participants is 17.77 years old (*SD* = 1.69); 69.1% (*n* = 368) are females, 30.5% (*n* = 162) are males, and .4% (*n* = 2) did not report their sex; 60.6% (*n* = 322) are in their first year of college, 27.9% (*n* = 148) are in second year, 7.2% (*n* = 38) are in third year, 1.3% (*n* = 7) are in fourth year, .2% (*n* = 1) is in fifth year, and 2.8% (*n* = 15) did not report their academic year level.

Data collection was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2015-2016. Researchers explained the nature of the study and the rights of the participants, and sought informed consent prior to the administration of the survey. All applicable ethical standards were followed in the conduct of the study.

Measures

The Locus-of-Hope Scale (Bernardo, 2010) was used in measuring the participants' dimensions of trait hope. It is a 32-item test composed of four subscales: internal locus-of-hope (e.g., "I meet the goals that I set for myself."), external-family (e.g., "My parents have lots of ways of helping me attain my goals."), external-peers (e.g., I have been able to meet my goals because of my friends' help."), and external-spiritual (e.g., "God has many different ways of letting me attain my goals."). The items are rated on a scale of 1 (*definitely false*) to 4 (*definitely true*). The Locus-of-Hope Scale has demonstrated adequate construct validity and reliability among Asians, including Filipino samples (Bernardo, 2010; Bernardo & Nalipay, 2016).

The society-focused future goal subscale of the Future Goals Questionnaire (FGQ) (Lee et al., 2010) was used in assessing society-oriented future goal. FGQ has a total of 15 items, with three items for each subscale. For the purpose of this study, we only used the data from the society-focused future goal subscale (e.g., "I want to develop my society."). The items of FGQ are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). FGQ and its subscales, including the society-focused future goal, have demonstrated sound psychometric properties (Lee et al., 2010).

Data analysis

In order to find out whether locus-of-hope dimensions predict society-oriented future goal, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The four subscales of the Locus-of-Hope Scale (internal locus-of-hope, external-family, external-peer, and external-spiritual) were entered as the predictors, while society-oriented future goal was assigned as the criterion variable.

Results

Table 1 shows the results of descriptive statistics for the study variables, as well as their correlations. It was found that both internal and external (i.e., family, peers, and spiritual) locus-of-hope dimensions are significantly and positively correlated with society-oriented future goal.

Table 2 presents the results of the regression analysis for society-oriented future goal. While both internal and external locus-of-hope dimensions were found to correlate positively with society-oriented future goal, only external locus-of-hope dimensions (i.e., family, peers, and spiritual) were found to be significant predictors of society-oriented future goal.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations of the study variables.

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Internal Hope	3.340	.531	---			
2. External Hope (Family)	3.394	.575	.534[a]	---		
3. External Hope (Peers)	3.124	.584	.527[a]	.470[a]	---	
4. External Hope (Spiritual)	3.627	.582	.469[a]	.515[a]	.282[a]	---
5. Society-Oriented Future Goal	3.497	.542	.300[a]	.318[a]	.283[a]	.304[a]

[a]*Significant at α = .01 level*

Table 2. Results of regression analysis for society-oriented future goal.

Predictors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Internal Hope	.089	.054	.088	1.654	.099
External – Family	.118	.050	.126[a]	2.387	.017
Eternal – Peers	.123	.045	.133[b]	2.708	.007
External – Spiritual	.150	.045	.161[b]	3.312	.001

[a]*Significant at α = .05 level*
[b]*Significant at α = .01 level*

Discussion

The study examined the role of locus-of-hope dimensions in promoting society-oriented future goal among college students. Consistent with the hypothesis, significant associations between hope and society-oriented future goal were found. Furthermore, external locus-of-hope dimensions (i.e., family, peers, and spirituality), but not internal locus-of-hope, were found to be significant predictors of society-oriented future goal. These findings suggest that when it comes to having aspirations of making valuable contributions to the society in

the future, seeing oneself as being capable of finding ways to achieve these goals and carrying them out may not be enough. Even more important is that the student sees the commitment and support of his or her parents and peers, as well as his or her spirituality (e.g., God, religion), in the pursuit of achieving goals for the society.

The realization of society-oriented future goal requires collective action. Moreover, its outcomes may affect not only the individual, but also the group in general. In keeping with Markus and Kitayama's (2003) coinjoint model of agency stipulating the role of interdependence as an important aspect in attaining collectively-defined goals, the findings highlight the significance of being able to see one's family, peers, and spirituality as co-agents in taking positive actions toward these goals. Having family, peers, and spirituality that are supportive and helpful in the students' pursuit of achieving social goals could increase their positive expectations about the feasibility of these goals being achieved; and this may strengthen their society-oriented future goal. These findings are also consistent with the association of external locus-of-hope with collectivism and related concepts (Bernardo, 2010). As collectivism emphasizes the interest of the group over one's own, the same is true with having future goals for the betterment of the society.

These findings have important implications. Given that future goals affect present actions (McInerney, 2004; Miller & Brickman, 2004), strengthening college students' society-oriented future goal could encourage them to take part and find more meaning in engaging in prosocial behaviors in the present; and increasing their external locus-of-hope by helping them view their parents, peers, and spiritual beings as co-agents in achieving these goals could be one way society-oriented future goal can be promoted. This could also indicate that instilling college students with the desire to contribute to their society is a collective action in which the involvement of

parents and peers, as well as their spiritual beliefs, may play an important role.

In terms of implications to education, knowing that hope may serve as a mechanism to which society-oriented future goal may be facilitated, it may be important that teachers provide a learning environment where hopeful cognitions grounded on others (i.e. family, peer, God) are strengthened. Strengthening college students' society-oriented future goal could motivate them to adopt goal-related behaviors in pursuing more specific personal goals in the academic domain like passing an exam or learning a new material. In other words, students who aspire to contribute to their society may use learning or education as a pathway in which they could attain such society-oriented goal. Indeed, for collectivist societies like with the Filipino participants of the study, academic achievement and completion of educational program may be construed as a social responsibility and not just a personal responsibility.

The study has some limitations. The use of cross-sectional method does not allow the inference of causal relationship between hope and society-oriented future goal. Also, the participants of the study are composed mainly of college students, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other populations. Moreover, the items of the questionnaire used to measure society-oriented future goal asked only regarding the general desire of the participants to contribute to the society, and these may not capture their specific future goals for the society. Despite these limitations, the study could possibly contribute to the available literature by clarifying the relationship between locus-of-hope and society-oriented future goal, which could be used as a basis for more detailed future studies and in designing interventions to promote society-oriented future goal among college students.

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