Hope Is the Most Impactful Emotion in Determining Long-Term Economic, Social Outcomes

Is hope just "a thing with feathers" as Dickenson wrote, or is it Aristotle's "waking dream?"

Or instead. is it "a promise we live" rather than a "promise we give" as Amanda Gorman wrote in 2021.

According to [new research] examining the impact of hope as a positive emotion on long-term economic and social outcomes, it's very much the Gorman definition.

That research presents evidence that not only is hope the least-studied dimension of positive emotional wellbeing, but that it's also likely the most consequential in terms of long-term outcomes—beyond things like happiness or security.

Hope in the researchers' paper was also associated with higher resilience, the ability to adapt, and a robust internal locus of control. Hopeful individuals were also less likely to be influenced by negative life events and adapted more quickly and completely after these events.

"Hope is not just a belief that things will get better (i.e., optimism), but the determination to make them better, which reflects agency and determination," they wrote in their introduction. "The distinction between tragic optimists and hopeful pessimists is another way to think of this."

Not only did they enjoy more positive outcomes in health, education, and economic undertakings than those who were less hopeful on average, but that moving from less hopeful to more hopeful was correlated with improved attainment in these dimensions.

The authors claim it's the first large-scale analysis showing the links between hope and a range of long-term life outcomes.

"We believe that better understanding the drivers of hope and its consequences can ultimately inform the ability of both individuals and of public policy to improve people's lives," the authors wrote in their conclusion.