

Toward a Comprehensive Measure of Hope

Anthony Scioli

Felice Scioli

Keene State College

Hobart College

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For Further Information Contact:

Dr. Anthony Scioli
Psychology Department
233 Rhodes Hall
Keene State College
Keene, NH 03431

Phone: 603-358-2541

Fax: 603-358-2184

Email: tscioli@keene.edu

Paper or poster, with paper preferred

Clinical or Social/ Personality

Willing to Chair Session

EPA Member

Abstract

Few deny the importance of hope. Unfortunately, the literature on hope is scant and fragmented, with each discipline focusing on a small part of this complex emotion. The few available hope instruments are also narrowly conceived. Guided by an integrative approach, the authors have developed a Comprehensive Hope Scale (CHS). Psychometric work, including a Principal Component Analysis, validates the multidimensional structure of the CHS, including scales for assessing dimensions of attachment, mastery, coping and spirituality.

Long Abstract

The Importance of Hope

Hope has been hailed by thinkers of every age from Aristotle to Marcel. It has been endorsed by the spiritually minded as well as the most atheistic philosophers and scientists. Modern investigators such as Erikson (1950), Frank (1968) and Godfrey (1987) have suggested there is no greater ally than hope. Unfortunately, there has been remarkably little empirical research on this topic to advance scholarship or facilitate clinical assessment and practice. In a famous hope lecture, Karl Menninger (1959) noted, “Our shelves are bare. The journals are silent.” In 2002, Sulmasy made a similar observation about hope assessment, stating, “There appear to be no well-developed measures of a patient’s own sense of either dignity or hope.”

An Integrative Perspective

An interdisciplinary approach suggests that hope is rooted in three motives: attachment, mastery and survival (Scioli et al., 1997; Scioli & Biller, 2003). The field of Psychology has tended to focus primarily on the mastery aspects of hope (e.g., Mowrer, 1960; Stotland, 1969; Snyder et al., 1991) while medicine has traditionally emphasized its survival or coping dimensions (Menninger, 1959). With the exception of Erikson (1985), philosophers have done the most in-depth exploration of hope’s attachment basis (Godfrey, 1987).

An integrative approach to hope combines the insights of the three major hope traditions. Moreover, it offers a rich conceptualization for guiding further empirical research or the design of hope-based instruments and interventions. Within the attachment domain, *trust and openness* are highlighted. These elements of hope are particularly important for developing a better understanding of such hope-related issues as faith, love, healing and spirituality. The mastery aspects of hope feature the concept of *mediated power*, a sense of control derived from a close relationship with a spiritual power or presence. Finally, hope is about survival issues, including coping, terror management, care recruitment and a sense of symbolic immortality.

Focus of the Present Investigation: Development of a Comprehensive Hope Test

This paper summarizes the development of a Comprehensive Hope Test (CHT). Construction of this instrument was guided by the first author’s theory of hope, which revolves around the motives of mastery, attachment and survival. Development of the CHS was also prompted by the lack of spiritual content in existing instruments designed to assess positive emotions such as hope (Snyder et al., 1991) and optimism (LOT; Scheier and Carver, 1987). For this reason we included dimensions such as spiritual presence, spiritual openness, and mystical experiences. Moreover, to validate the “spiritual” and interfaith applicability of the CHS we collected data on participants’ religious or spiritual preferences.

The CHS is multidimensional. The state hope scale is comprised of 4 subscales while the trait hope section includes 15 subscales. The initial item pool consisted of 20 state hope items and 82 trait hope items. Initial psychometric work on the IHS began in the fall of 2002 with a collection of two samples. In the spring of 2003 a third round of data collection was completed.

State Hope (CHT-S)

Supported Mastery
Spiritual Presence
Social Bonds
Terror Management

Trait Hope (CHT-T)

Mastery Cluster
Trust-based Mastery
Spiritual Empowerment
Social Empowerment
Positive Future

Attachment Cluster
World-Openness
Spiritual-Openness
Self-Openness
Basic Trust
Mystical Experience
Benign Universe

Survival Cluster
Survival-oriented Trust
Personal Terror Management
Spiritual Terror Management
Care Recruitment
Symbolic Immortality

Methods

Participants

The participants for studies one, two and three were young adults attending a small liberal arts college in the Northeast. The sample sizes were 34, 41, and 84 respectively, and included 56 males and 103 females.

In study one, participants were given a packet that included a demographics sheet, the Comprehensive Hope Test, a standard measure of optimism (Life Orientation Test; Scheier and Carver, 1987), and an established measure of death-related depression (Templer, Lavoie, Chalgujian, & Thomas-Dobson, 1990).

In study two, participants were given a packet that included a demographics sheet, the Comprehensive Hope Test, and the Snyder et. al. (1991) Hope Scale.

In study three, participants were given a packet that included a demographics sheet, a religious and spiritual beliefs probe, the Comprehensive Hope Test, and an established measure of social desirability (SDS: Marlowe-Crowne, 1960). The religious and spiritual probe consisted of a description of seven spiritual belief systems (Buddhist, Christian, Earth-Centered, Judaic, Hindu, Muslim, Native American). Participants were asked to rate their preference for each belief system using a 4 point Likert scale (from highly unappealing to highly appealing).

Results

Stability of the Hope Scales: Principal Component Analysis and Internal Consistency

State Hope

To assess the factorial validity of the state hope subscales, a Principal Component Analysis was performed. Since we presumed correlated factors, a Direct Oblim rotation was selected. Four factors were extracted with Eigen values greater than 1. Together, these factors accounted for just over 60 percent of the total variance. Consisting of three to four items each, these factors corresponded to the four original state hope scales. (All but one loading was .40 or greater). The alpha level for the reduced 15 item state hope scale was .81. Alpha levels for the 4 subscales ranged from a low of .61 to a high of .92.

Trait Hope

The trait hope items were also analyzed with Principal Component Analysis (Direct Oblim rotation). Thirteen of the fifteen proposed factors were identified. (Trust-Based Mastery and Social Empowerment merged into one factor. A similar merger was found involving Mystical Experience and a Benign Universe.) The reduced Trait Hope Scale consisted of 45 items (3 items per subscale). The alpha level for the total scale was .89. The alpha levels for the 13 subscales ranged from .53 to .83.

Age, Gender and Spiritual Beliefs

There were no significant age or gender effects related to the CHS-S or the CHS-T. We were able to classify participants into one of four spiritual groups: Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and “poly-spiritual” (those who endorsed multiple belief systems). Separate one-way ANOVAS revealed no group differences for either State Hope ($F(82) = .31, p > .05$) or Trait Hope ($F(.81) = .81, p > .05$).

Social Desirability, Convergent and Discriminate Validity

A moderate positive correlation was found between social desirability scores and the State and Trait Hope Total Scores ($r = .38, p < .05$ and $r = .37, p < .05$).

The Comprehensive State Hope scale (CHS-S) was positively correlated with both the Life Orientation Test of optimism ($r = .53, p < .01$) and the Snyder Hope Scale ($r = .57, p < .01$).

However, neither the LOT scores nor the Snyder Hope Scale scores were significantly correlated with the spiritual subscale of the CHS-S.

The Comprehensive Trait Hope Scale (CHS-T) was positively correlated with both the Life Orientation Test of optimism ($r = .37, p < .01$) and the Snyder Hope Scale ($r = .43, p < .01$). But again, none of the spiritual subscales of the CHS-T were significantly correlated with the LOT and only one (spiritual terror management) was significantly correlated with the Snyder scale ($r = .44, P < .01$). Overall, only three of the 13 CHS-T scores were significantly correlated in a positive direction with the LOT. Interestingly, there was a strong negative correlation between LOT scores and the CHS-T measure of symbolic immortality ($r = -.59, p < .01$). Three of the five significant correlations between the Snyder scale and the CHS-T involved the mastery scales.

As expected, the CHS-S (state) hope scores were inversely related to the *death depression scores* ($r = -.39, P < .05$). Further analysis revealed this correlation was primarily the result of a strong negative relationship between the terror management subscale of the CHS-S and death depression ($r = -.47, P < .01$). The total CHS-T (trait) hope scores were not significantly correlated with death depression. However, spiritual empowerment, spiritual terror management and personal terror management, were all significantly correlated with death depression ($r = -.39, p < .05$; $r = -.49, p < .01$; $r = -.40, p < .05$, respectively).

Discussion

Two interesting findings from the Principal Component Analysis involved the merger of social empowerment and trait mastery within the mastery cluster and mystical experiences with beliefs about a benign universe within the attachment cluster (trait hope scales). The former highlights the collaborative nature of hopeful mastery while the latter signifies the union of cognitive and affective elements in spiritual phenomena. Consistent with a mastery bias in American hope psychology, most of the correlations between established scales of hope and optimism and the CHS involved the mastery subscales of this new measure.

Although both the State Hope and Trait Hope total scores were correlated with social desirability scores, the overlap in variance was modest, averaging less than 15 percent. This level of social desirability is comparable to other established measures of emotion or personality. The need for further scale development is discussed in terms of developing norms with a broader sample, including participants from across the lifespan, atheists, agnostics, and other spiritual followers.