

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF APACHE HOPEFULNESS: RELATIONSHIPS WITH HOPELESSNESS AND WITH COLLECTIVE AS WELL AS PERSONAL SELF-ESTEEM

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Abstract: Hopelessness is central to prominent mental health problems within American Indian (AI) communities. Apaches living on a reservation in Arizona responded to diverse expressions of hope along with Hopelessness, Personal Self-Esteem, and Collective Self-Esteem scales. An Apache Hopefulness Scale expressed five themes of hope and correlated negatively with Hopelessness and positively with both Collective and Personal Self-Esteem. These data confirmed the potential of conducting more extensive analyses of hope within AI tribal life.

Psychological adjustment of the Apache self requires coping resources that address the challenges of tribal life. That these challenges are collective as well as personal seems apparent in the well-documented mental health problems of American Indians (AIs) in general (Barron, Oge, & Markovich, 1999), and of Apaches in particular (May & Van Winkle, 1994). Powerlessness, low self-esteem, and a sense of hopelessness are central to many of these mental health problems, which include depression, suicide, and alcoholism (Trimble, 2000). The Beck Hopelessness Scale (Beck & Steer, 1988) operationalizes a pessimistic explanatory style that predicts many of these disorders.

Logically, the antidote to hopelessness should be hopefulness. Hope is defined, in part, “by the perception of successful agency related to goals” (Snyder et al., 1991, p. 570). Hopefulness can be learned (Zimmerman, 1990), and an understanding of Apache opportunities to learn hope could be useful in efforts to improve tribal life. Culturally sensitive approaches to counseling, for example, could focus on efforts to develop greater Apache hopefulness (LaFromboise, Trimble, & Mohatt, 1990).

The present project sought to conduct a preliminary assessment hopefulness among Apaches living on a reservation. Tribal life seemed to present five more obvious opportunities for developing a sense of personal agency: family life, education, work, communal involvement, and spirituality. The researchers developed a preliminary Apache Hopefulness Scale that included at least one item

expressing each of these five themes. The presumption was that adjustment of the Apache self is a collective as well as a personal process. A valid Apache Hopefulness Scale should therefore correlate predictably not only with the Beck Hopelessness Scale and with Personal Self-Esteem (Rosenberg, 1989), but also with Collective Self-Esteem (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990). The Collective Self-Esteem Scale measures positive perceptions of the self as a member of the group (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) and may be as important as individual self-esteem in defining the adjustment of ethnic groups (Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994).

In summary, this study offered a preliminary assessment of Apache hopefulness. The assumption was that Apaches might develop hopeful perceptions of personal agency in activities associated with family life, education, work, communal involvement, and spirituality. The further expectation was that Apache Hopefulness would correlate negatively with Hopelessness and positively with both Personal and Collective Self-Esteem.

METHOD

Participants

A convenience sample of 91 individuals included 23 men and 68 women who lived on the White Mountain Apache Reservation in Whiteriver, Arizona. Their average age was 30.6 years, with a range from 18 to 67 years. Thirty percent of the sample was full-blooded Apache, with the remainder being at least partially Apache. Thirty-eight of the participants were employed, and 76 had received a high school diploma or GED. All participation was voluntary, uncompensated, and in full conformity with institutional ethical guidelines.

Measures

In addition to assessing background characteristics, the questionnaire booklet used in this project included four psychological scales:

Personal Self-Esteem (10 items, $\alpha = .70$, M response per item = 2.91, $SD = 0.42$)

The widely used Rosenberg (1989) Self-Esteem Scale operationalized global personal self-esteem. Reactions to the items of this instrument occurred along a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (4) *strongly agree*. Illustrating greater self-esteem were self-reports that “I take a positive attitude toward myself” and the reverse-scored assertion that “I certainly feel useless at times.”

Collective Self-Esteem (15 items, $\alpha = .78$; $M = 4.56$; $SD = 0.83$)

The Luhtanen and Crocker (1990) scale recorded four dimensions of Collective Self-Esteem: Membership (“I am a worthy member of the social groups I belong to”), Private Collective Self-Esteem (“In general, I’m glad to be a member of the social groups I belong to”), Public Collective Self-Esteem (“Overall, my social groups are considered good by others”), and Identity (“The social groups I belong to are an important reflection of who I am”). Reactions to the four items from each subscale ranged from (1) *strongly disagree* to (7) *strongly agree*. Preliminary analysis revealed poor internal reliabilities for each subscale, with Cronbach’s alpha equal to .52 or lower. All 16 items were, therefore, combined into a single index of Collective Self-Esteem, with the removal of one item clearly improving internal reliability (i.e., the reverse-scored statement that “I feel I don’t have much to offer to the social groups I belong to”). The psychometric adequacy and validity of Collective Self-Esteem Scale has been confirmed with ethnically diverse samples (e.g., Crocker et al., 1994; Liang, & Fassinger, 2008; Zea, Reisen, & Poppen, 1999).

Hopelessness (20 items, $\alpha = .80$; $M = 1.30$; $SD = 0.20$)

The 20 items of the Beck Hopelessness Scale included such statements as “I might as well give up because I can’t make things better for myself” and the reverse-scored claim that “in the future, I expect to succeed in what concerns me most” (Beck & Steer, 1988). This instrument used a true (2)-false (1) response format and has well-established validity (Beck, Steer, Beck, & Newman, 1993; Beck, Steer, Kovacs, & Garrison, 1985).

Apache Hopefulness

Items for a possible Apache Hopefulness Scale focused on five categories of life experience thought to be principal areas of potential Apache hopefulness: family, education, work, spirituality, and community. These themes reflected experiences of the first author who worked periodically over a 3-year period as a community volunteer in Whiteriver. Each category contained 10 possible items, including such statements as “I feel hopeful that I will have a stable, long-term job” and “I fear that I will not be someone my family turns to for support” (reverse scored). Reverse-scored statements were included to help control for acquiescence response sets. Reactions to each item involved a (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree* response format.

Procedures

Residents of the reservation participated in this study during the summer of 2006. The first author identified possible participants through personal contacts. All were at least 18 years old and came from various tribal venues, including a grocery store, stands selling food and crafts on the street, the post office, a community college, gas stations, a crisis pregnancy center, and the local jail.

The researcher emphasized the general purpose and voluntary nature of the project and guaranteed the confidentiality of all responding. After signing informed consent forms, participants completed the questionnaire in approximately 30 minutes. All responded privately within the general locale in which they had been contacted, and all received thanks for their cooperation.

Construction of a final Apache Hopefulness Scale occurred in three steps. First, we examined the internal reliability of all 50 items combined together, and removed any statement displaying a negative item-to-total correlation. Second, we pared down the remaining items in a sequence of internal reliability analyses that gradually eliminated statements associated with relatively lower item-to-total correlations. In this process, we retained at least one item from each of the life experience categories of potential hopefulness and reduced the total items down to a number that would be acceptable for a very preliminary principal components analysis (i.e., approximately 18 items reflecting 5 participants per item). Third, we further reduced the measure through internal reliability and principal components analysis. We created a final scale by identifying statements that loaded on the first factor of the principal components analysis and that had an item-to-total correlation of at least .30. A final principal components analysis confirmed that all items loaded at .30 or greater when the data were forced into a single factor. We then examined relationships of this preliminary Apache Hopefulness Scale with all other measures.

RESULTS

The final Apache Hopefulness Scale contained the 14 items presented in Table 1. Each statement displayed an item-to-total correlation of .38 or greater and a loading of at least .47 on the single dimension of the final principal components analysis. This component accounted for 39.6% of the total response variance. This scale included four statements related to family, five associated with education, two each for the work and spirituality categories, and one community item. Mean responding was 3.15 (SD = 0.51) on the 5-point Likert scale. Cronbach’s alpha was .87.

Table 1
Items involving Family (F), Education (E), Work (W), Community (C), and Spirituality (S)
in the Final Apache Hopefulness Scale

Items	Item-to-Total Correlation	Component Loading
1. I see myself having good relationships with my family members in the future. (F)	.52	.60
2. I do not think I will ever be able to improve my education status from the point I am at now. (E)*	.49	.55
3. I feel hopeful that I will be self-confident in my future jobs. (W)	.68	.76

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Table 1, Continued
Items involving Family (F), Education (E), Work (W), Community (C), and Spirituality (S)
in the Final Apache Hopefulness Scale

Items	Item-to-Total Correlation	Component Loading
4. I do not think that getting a higher education is possible for me. (E)*	.54	.60
5. I feel that I will be a person that my family members can confide in. (F)	.63	.72
6. I fear that I will not be able to better my community in any way. (C)*	.54	.59
7. I believe that I will be proficient at a specific trade or skill. (E)	.61	.69
8. I feel hopeful that the knowledge I will gain from my education will be beneficial in my future. (E)	.55	.64
9. I am confident that I will be a hard-working, reliable employee. (W)	.50	.59
10. I feel that my experiences will prepare me to have a good family in future. (F)	.58	.67
11. I feel hopeful that I will be a positive influence in the lives of my family members. (F)	.61	.70
12. I do not see myself having a spiritual connection anytime in the future. (S)*	.43	.49
13. My eagerness for gaining knowledge will increase as I go through life. (E)	.58	.67
14. I am hopeful that I will be rewarded in the afterlife for the actions I do in my life. (S)	.38	.47

*Reverse scored

Table 2 summarizes the Apache Hopefulness Scale's correlations with other measures. Apache Hopefulness, Personal Self-Esteem, and Collective Self-Esteem correlated positively with each other and negatively with Hopelessness. No differences appeared between the correlations of Apache Hopefulness with Personal and Collective Self-Esteem, $t(88) = 0.10, p > .50$. However, the linkage of the Beck Hopelessness Scale with Personal Self-Esteem was stronger than its association with Collective Self-Esteem, $t(88) = 2.88, p < .01$.

Table 2
Correlations among Apache Hopefulness Scale, Beck Hopelessness Scale,
Collective Self-Esteem Scale, and Personal Self-Esteem Scale

Variables	Apache Hopefulness	Beck Hopelessness	Collective Self-esteem	Rosenberg Self-esteem
Apache Hopefulness	-	-0.64***	0.52***	0.51***
Beck Hopelessness		-	-0.38***	-0.68***
Collective Self-esteem			-	0.35**
Personal Self-esteem				-

* $p < .01$

** $p < .001$

*** $p < .0001$

To what extent did both forms of self-esteem combine to predict hope-related psychological functioning? To answer that question, Personal and Collective Self-Esteem served as simultaneous predictors in multiple regression procedures. When Apache Hopefulness was the dependent variable, the multiple R^2 was .39 ($p < .001$) with both Personal ($\beta = .38, p < .001$) and Collective Self-Esteem ($\beta = .38, p < .001$) serving as reliable predictors. When Hopelessness was the dependent variable, the multiple R^2 was .48 ($p < .001$) with Personal ($\beta = -.62; p < .001$) but not Collective Self-Esteem ($\beta = -.16, p > .05$) proving to be a significant predictor.

DISCUSSION

Hopelessness may be central to prominent mental health problems within AI communities. The present project assumed that opportunities for hopefulness exist within tribal life and can serve as resources for overcoming hopelessness. Apaches living on a reservation in Arizona responded to 50 possible expressions of hope. A final, internally reliable 14-item Apache Hopefulness Scale made reference to five potential themes of Apache hopefulness. As hypothesized, Apache Hopefulness correlated negatively with Hopelessness and positively with Collective as well as with Personal Self-Esteem.

This project represented only a very preliminary effort to define Apache Hopefulness. The specific statements of the final scale, for example, could not have exhaustively expressed the five themes of hopefulness. Even a preliminary assessment, nevertheless, should be useful in identifying key elements of Apache hope. Of the 14 final items, the statement loading strongest on the final principal components analysis expressed hope relative to employment: "I feel hopeful that I will be self-confident in my future jobs." The theme with the largest number of items was education, with the strongest loading apparent in the assertion, "I believe that I will be proficient at a specific trade or skill," a belief which had clear work implications as well. Four items made reference to family life, with each displaying a loading of .60 or greater. The family item with the strongest loading stated, "I feel that I will be a person that my family members can confide in." In short, work, education, and family life may be especially important in future efforts to understand opportunities for Apache hope.

Other themes may make some contribution as well. The final scale included two spirituality items, with the strongest loading apparent for the reverse-scored belief that "I do not see myself having a spiritual connection anytime in the future." Within the limited procedural parameters of this project, only one expression of community-related hopefulness could be identified. This reverse-scored item said, "I fear that I will not be able to better my community in any way." Inclusion of only one belief about community life might mean that the attempt to express this

theme was relatively unsuccessful, and that additional articulations of community relevant hope may deserve special further consideration. Alternatively, this result might mean that community involvement is a relatively weak source of Apache hope. If so, it may be important to remember the clear linkage between Apache Hopefulness and Collective Self-Esteem. Such a finding suggests that hopefulness for Apaches has a collective dimension and that explicit efforts to strengthen the communal foundations of hope might be necessary to maximally address tribal needs.

Apache Hopefulness correlated strongly with Hopelessness. Why not, then, simplify the issue by relying solely upon the Beck Hopelessness Scale to sketch an adequate, albeit mirror-imaged, depiction of hope within tribal life? A first answer to that question returns to the assumption that psychological adjustment of the Apache self is a collective as well as a personal process. Apache Hopefulness was more successful than Hopelessness in assessing the collective dimension of adjustment. Apache Hopefulness, for example, correlated equally well with both forms of self-esteem, whereas the Beck Hopelessness Scale correlated more strongly with Personal Self-Esteem. Even more noteworthy was the finding that only Personal Self-Esteem served as a significant multiple regression predictor of Hopelessness, whereas both forms of self-esteem predicted Apache Hopefulness. The two forms of self-esteem did tend to explain greater variance in Hopelessness than in Apache Hopefulness, but refinements in the measurement of Apache Hopefulness could increase the overall variance explained. In short, one reason for examining not only the Beck Hopelessness Scale was that Apache Hopefulness seemed to be more successful in accounting for the collective dimension of psychological adjustment.

A second reason may also argue against a sole reliance upon the Beck Hopelessness Scale. Again, hope is defined, in part, “by the perception of successful agency related to goals” (Snyder et al., 1991, p. 570); this project sought to discern opportunities for successful Apache agency. In addition, however, “hope is influenced by the perceived availability of successful pathways related to goals” (Snyder et al., p. 570). An ultimately successful research program into the hopefulness of AIs would, therefore, do three things: (1) offer a comprehensive assessment of opportunities for successful agency within tribal life, (2) engage in formal evaluations of the pathways available for achieving those goals, and (3) analyze opportunities for bringing personal agency and pathways together. In other words, an assessment of tribal circumstances based solely upon the Beck Hopelessness Scale would merely define the problem. A focus on hopefulness might encourage a broader vision that more explicitly explored opportunities for making things better. Of course, this study served only as a very preliminary analysis of hopefulness. Explorations of the ultimate potentials of hopefulness will obviously require a much more extensive and long-term research program.

Numerous limitations characterized this project. Again, Apache Hopefulness items may not have fully expressed the five proposed themes of hopefulness. Further reflection might reveal that some potentially relevant themes were not even examined. The number of participants was small, and a convenience sample was utilized. A larger, more representative sample would obviously yield more definitive information and would make it possible to develop more complex, multidimensional indices of hopefulness. Additional procedures will be needed to establish test-retest reliability, to examine age and gender differences, and to assess whether engagement in Apache culture influences responding. Evidence of measurement invariance is available for the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale in early adolescent AIs (e.g., Michaels, Barr, Roosa, & Knight, 2007), but measurement equivalence will also need to be evaluated with older samples and with all of the other measures used in this project. Finally, these data reflected Apache tribal circumstances within a very specific locale. Whether such results generalize to other locales or to other tribes is an important question.

In conclusion, hopelessness may be a noteworthy element in the mental health problems experienced by AIs. This project assumed that opportunities for hopefulness can be identified within tribal life and may have a potential for working against hopelessness by addressing collective as well as personal dimensions of psychological adjustment. Findings from this preliminary study supported that assumption and suggested that a focus on hope, rather than on hopelessness alone, might have advantages in future efforts to address the challenges of tribal life. In general terms, therefore, the most important conclusion of the present project may be that a source of hopefulness may exist within formal social scientific efforts to better understand the hopes of AIs.

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AUTHORS' NOTE

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Formal tribal approval was not required as long as informed consent was obtained from participants, which was done.