

## Other Papers

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### Basic hope as a world-view: an outline of a concept

*After Erikson's (1963, 1964) conceptualization, a new theory of basic hope is proposed. Basic hope is considered a fundamental constituent of an individual's world view, mostly unconscious and learned very early. It consists of the belief in two characteristics of the world: its higher order and sense and its general positivity towards a human being. Basic Hope Inventory (BHI) was developed to measure the strength of basic hope. The first data indicates that basic hope correlates positively with adaptive reactions to personal loss and with constructive long-term consequences of it and that these correlations are independent from the impact of optimism and hope for success (Snyder, 1994). Basic hope seems to predict positive effects in psychotherapy, it correlates positively with well-being and negatively with anxiety, depression and psychosomatic symptoms.*

**Keywords:** *hope, basic hope, personal loss, coping*

Our aim is to outline the notion of hope derived from Erikson's theory of personality development (Erikson, 1963, 1964). In this theory hope is considered as a fundamental belief belonging to an individual's world-view. This meaning of hope is different from the popular notion that relates hope to self-knowledge or belief in one's own future perspectives. The Eriksonian hope is thus a feature of the world, as understood by people, whereas the other kind of hope is a conviction about the self – more specifically, about his or her own future. This difference is not a semantic matter. In our opinion, it points to two autonomous psychological structures with a distinct regulative power. In this article we propose the conceptualization of hope in the Eriksonian sense and present data supporting our hypotheses. We will use the term basic hope to relate to hope as a constituent of a world's view, to accentuate a fundamental role it plays in personality development, according to Erikson, and to delineate it from more ego-centered hope.

#### A theory

##### Two hopes

Common sense and mainstream psychological practice tells us that hope relates to the self. It is almost a common agreement that hope is a conviction about our own attributes, or attributes of our own fate, and means expectation of a positive trajectory toward future events, especially as regards the fulfilment of one's own goals (Frank, 1973; Menninger, 1959; Mowrer, 1960; Snyder, 1994; Stotland, 1969).

A good example of this notion is Snyder's contemporary theory of hope (Snyder, 1994, Snyder, Cheavens, Michael, 2000). He has postulated recently that: "Hope is a reciprocally derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed determination) and (b) pathways (planning of ways to meet goals)." (.....) "Pathway thought involves the perceived capacity to come up with mental road maps to reach goals. Second, the individual thinks about his or her perceived capability to move along the selected pathway to the goal. Agency thought mobilizes the person to

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use given pathways. In summary, hope reflects a thinking process in which the protagonist perceives that he or she can produce the pathway(s) to reach the goal, as well as the agency to actually use the existing pathway(s)" (Snyder, Harris, Anderson, Holleran, Irving, Sigmon, Yoshinobu, Gibb, Langelle & Harney 1991 p. 571). The type of hope described above is a constituent of self-concept and it may change along with changes in self-concept. There is a substantial amount of data showing the importance of ego-centered hope in pursuing one's own goals and reactions to obstacles of goal-fulfilment. We assume however, that besides this ego-centered hope, there is another hope – we will call it basic hope – which is a crucial constituent of a person's concept of the world.

### Basic hope

Basic hope is a fundamental belief in two features of the world: (a) its order and meaning, and (b) its positiveness. According to Erikson, basic hope is unconsciously learned by a small child observing relations in family, especially family's reactions to his or her needs. Regularities in surrounding important events along with positive attitudes towards a child's needs form the basis for the development of basic hope. This deep, very early learned belief may be expressed in a person's consciousness in several ways but is usually not fully verbalized and is not an object of conscious, effortful analyses and reconstructions. A great role in verbalization of the basic hope is played by culture. Literature, myths, religion, arts express basic hope in different forms and the individual may choose from these cultural productions those which match their feelings and thoughts. Participation in these cultural products and practices may also strengthen the individual's basic hope. Also, people negotiate and maintain their basic hope in communication and everyday interaction with others. They do it openly by verbalization and in ready made cultural forms, or non-directly, by the decisions and reactions they make based on weak or strong basic hope.

Erikson stressed how important a child's earliest social experiences are and the great impact they can have on the formation of basic hope. In Erikson's theory, basic hope was the first competence (virtue) of the ego, on the basis of which other competencies may develop, like will, identity or love. Basic hope to a majority of people, he assumed, is strong enough to support further ego development. This positive pathway is caused and encouraged by a human family that is generally constructive and pro-child oriented in character. However, basic hope may differ in terms of its strength: individuals may possess weaker or stronger basic hope. It might also be expected,

that later, during a person's development, basic hope, besides changes in forms of expression and level of awareness, may change its strength, as a consequence of serious dramatic events in an individual's life.

The concept of basic hope differs from the common view of hope or optimism – as a belief in one's own positive future (Seligman, 1991) or in one's personal ability to realize one's own goals (Snyder, Cheavens & Michael, 2000). These later beliefs relate to specific episodes in the individual's world – to an individual's life itself or to a specific individual's role or activity. One consequence of this difference is that an individual may hold strong basic hope but does not believe in himself in a given situation or in a given role he enacts, or even in the stability and rightness of his present day self-identity. It means that an individual may possess strong basic hope but does not possess optimism as regards to his nearest future nor a strong belief in himself at a given moment in his life. So, basic hope does not mean an unconditional belief that everything will go well in someone's life.

### Activation of basic hope

Usually, the belief in order and positivity in the world is cognitively inactive. It is thus tacit knowledge that gives a background to the functioning of daily-life oriented knowledge systems. This belief becomes activated when private order in an individual's life is threatened or broken-up. This activation of basic hope does not necessarily mean that it becomes fully verbalized and subjected to analysis, but it means that an individual becomes aware of it and that he or she considers it when interpreting one's own situation, when setting aspirations and when making decisions.

The role of basic hope is to stimulate and to support an individual's constructive way of dealing with important loss or with challenges and new opportunities in an individual's life. Important loss, like the death of a close friend, the loss of a job, becoming disabled, or new opportunities, like emigration, marriage, a first child born, a new job, means threat to the old private order in one's life or in a given life's domain. The individual is challenged by the question: Can I survive the destruction of the old order and – can I find a new order in my life? Basic hope provides a strong, probably necessary argument for a positive answer to these two questions.

### The role of basic hope

Consequently, the level of basic hope should influence the character of an individual's reaction to the threat to personal order. A stronger basic hope – in comparison to a weaker one – allows

to accept the loss and facilitates emotions of resignation from a lost object or aspects of one's own life and – therefore – facilitates cognitive and emotional readiness to constructively approach a challenge of building up a new personal order. According to Clark and Watson (1988) the stage of resignation which is accompanied by the emotion of sadness and situational depression is an adaptive and necessary episode in the process of adaptation to trauma and loss.

Basic hope prevents panic search for recompensation or to rebuild the lost object, when the loss is irreversible. For a person with weak basic hope a shattered private order may be defended longer and more compulsively, because it was seen as the only possible one within reality which does not guarantee the existence of a new order. Basic hope is a precondition to openness-to-experience and to a tendency to search for new possibilities. In this sense it increases the probability of overcoming a crisis by finding a constructive solution and by promoting personality development. In Kruglanski's conceptualization (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996), the tendency of "seizing" instead of "freezing" in a cognitive reaction to a new situation, sometimes a traumatic one, results in a more creative and constructive attitude to the loss or new challenge to an old life.

Recent theories propose, that stress and trauma may have positive long-term consequences for an individual (Aldwin, 1994). The progress caused by stress may be seen at the level of instrumental competencies as well as in the system of personal values, attitudes to others and oneself and in the content of personal interests (Armeli, Gunther & Cohen, 2001). We expect that basic hope is among the most important personality factors for these progressive processes to occur, after a trauma.

### Basic hope and self-belief

We think that belief in one's own success and basic hope may constitute two important and functionally different factors – although complementary in many situations – that provide the background for a constructive response to problems and an openness to new opportunities. In the case of failures and difficulties with goal realization, when the subjective order of a given life domain is maintained however, belief in one's own abilities (Bandura, 1986) and one's own success (Snyder, 1994) are most important factors that help in reaching goals, despite troubles. However, when the trouble is losing something important to the personal order of life and thus causes a threat to this order, the self-oriented attitudes and convictions will play a marginal role. They are based on personal experiences and

others' opinions collected within this life domain which are now in jeopardy, so they can not provide a strong premise. Basic hope now becomes the most important factor. Being strong enough may shape a person's understanding of the present situation and prognoses of future events and may help him or her to display two healthy reactions: resignation from what has been lost and being open and positive towards new opportunities in searching for a new order in one's own life.

When personal order is intact but a person is experiencing failure or difficulties, all kinds of social support which increase optimism and belief in oneself are helpful. In case of a threat to or a breaking-up of the personal order however, these kinds of support might not be effective. Instead, evoking cultural symbols – in literature and in religion, for example – or meeting a person who expresses strong basic hope, may reinforce basic hope, which is in that case needed first of all.

## Data

### Measurement of the strength of basic hope

#### *Basic Hope Inventory*

An inventory measuring the strength of basic hope consisted of 12 statements. The task for the subject was to evaluate on a 5-point scale how well a given statement express his or her feelings and beliefs. Here are 9 diagnostic items:

1. There are no objectively wrong and good things in the world
2. The world is good even if we are not doing well
3. There will always be someone somewhere who will help us in a misfortune
4. \* The reality that surrounds us is inexplicable and unpredictable
5. The world is just and everyone will get what they deserve, sooner or later
6. \* Events important for us are fortuitous and we lie at the mercy of fortune
7. \* Fate is unfavorable to me
8. The world is meaningful and all things have some sense even if we feel lost sometimes

The questionnaire ended with the following task: "Read two opinions at the opposite poles of a 5-points graphic scale and mark the place on scale indicating closeness of your beliefs to these opinions:

All bad things will eventually get more positive. All bad things will eventually get worse."

The items asterixed are reversed in terms of the strength of basic hope.

#### *Reliability of the BHI*

In several studies (N=616) the internal coherency of the BHI items is high (Cronbach'

alpha=0.82). Also from time to time the inventory items correlation (2 months delay between first measurement and the second one) is high ( $r=0.62$ ). The factor analysis (via Varimax) of BHI items indicated two factors: positivity of the world (explains 38% of variance) and order and meaningfulness of the world (explains 16% of variance). Several items are highly loaded by both factors. This result is in agreement with our presuppositions.

### Basic hope among other personality characteristics

Basic hope appears to be autonomous with the "big five" fundamental personality factors. BHI correlates moderately with openness to experience ( $r=0.34$ ,  $p=0.001$ ), and low with extraversion ( $r=0.29$ ,  $p=0.004$ ), conscientiousness ( $r=0.28$ ,  $p=0.005$ ), and does not correlate with neuroticism and agreeableness from Costa, McCrae NEO-FFI Inventory (Costa, McCrae, 1992). Basic hope does not relate to conservative values and inclination to social stability. BHI does not correlate with authoritarian scales measuring orientation to authority and tradition (Kwissa, 2003). The Polish General Social Survey 2003 shows that there are no significant differences in the level of basic hope between persons declaring themselves as religious believers and non-believers or between believers with different involvement in religious activities. The only exceptions are persons declaring deep involvement in religious values: They have stronger basic hope than the rest of the Polish population. Basic hope is rather independent from declarative and practice-oriented religiousness although it co-occurs moderately with higher involvement in religion as a system of values and beliefs, at least in Polish culture.

### Consequences of the strength of basic hope

#### *The role of basic hope in the processes of overcoming life's difficulties*

High school students were asked to recollect and to describe "the most difficult situation which had occurred in school or in relations with friends, within the last four years" (Krzesniak, 2003). Then they were asked to describe their reactions to this event using a questionnaire with the description of 47 examples of reactions with five point scales to evaluate the frequency of exhibiting a given reaction. The examples included cognitive reactions ("I was convinced that the troubles would pass in time"), emotional reactions ("Everything associated with this situation reinforced my bad feelings"), and decisional reactions ("Very soon I start to think coldly about what might be done in this situation"). Adaptability of reactions was observed which meant cognitive and emotional resignation from

irreversible losses, constructive thoughts on new possibilities, lack of recurring and uncontrollable negative emotions, and making decisions to attempt to overcome the difficulty. At the beginning of the study subjects filled in BHI and ADHS. Anova in which basic hope and hope for success were two factors indicated that basic hope positively relates to the adaptability of cognitive and emotional reactions to the trouble [ $F(1, 96)=4.60$ ,  $p<0.05$  and  $F(1, 96)=4.01$ ,  $p<0.05$ ] with no significant effect of the second factor. However, in the case of decisional reactions, the interaction of the two factors appeared to be significant [ $F(1, 96)=4.67$ ,  $p<0.05$ ]. As Figure 1 illustrates, in a case of low basic hope decisional reactions are rare, independently from the level of hope-for-success. In a case of strong basic hope, the decisional reactions are more frequent only when hope-for-success is high. So, making adaptive decisions in a difficult situation seems to be a joint product of both strong basic hope and belief in one's own success.

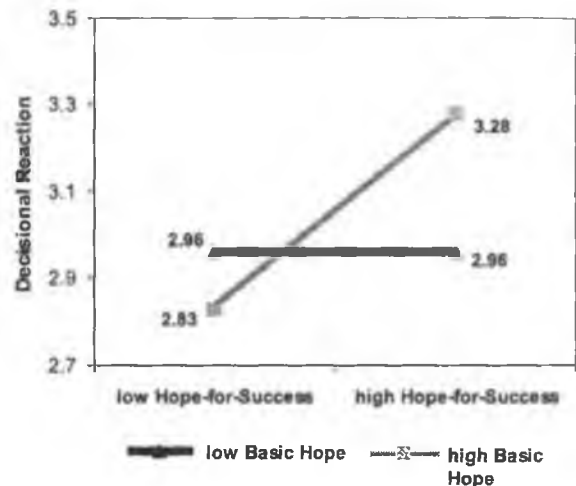


Figure 1. Decisional Reaction in relation to Basic Hope and Hope-for-Success.

It might be said that basic hope alone increases the adaptability of thoughts and emotional states after trouble, but strong basic hope has had to be accompanied by a strong enough belief in one's own success to transform these thoughts and emotions into constructive decisions and actions. This data may suggest an important role of basic hope in internal action control. Especially in the case of threat to the private order of the world's niche or in case of new opportunities, strong basic hope may be a necessary mediator in the process of searching for information and decision making and then implementing the decisions. In this later case, basic hope has to be accompanied by belief in one's own success, which may partly be a consequence of basic hope.

*The role of basic hope and hope for one's own success in coping with personal loss or with failure to achieve one's goal*

After filling-in the BHI and ADHS (Snyder, Cheavens and Michael, 2000) the subjects (students) were asked to recollect from autobiographical memory either personal irreversible loss or important failure in realizing one's personal goal, which happened within the last five years (Gujski, 2003). They were explained the meaning of appropriate life situations and were provided with examples. (like "the breaking up of a love relationship" vs. "failure in an important sporting competition"). To aid the subject to concentrate on the recollected event they were asked to describe it. Then subjects filled in a questionnaire measuring styles of coping CISS (Polish version of Endler and Parker, 1992). They were asked to answer questions bearing in mind their reactions to the described event only.

The significant was an interaction of basic hope and type of difficulty on a tendency to withdraw (a subscale in the avoidance orientation):  $F(1, 84)=3.68, p<0.05$ . As shown in Figure 2 those with a higher basic hope in comparison to those with a lower basic hope more often exhibit a tendency to withdraw after a personal loss but exhibit this tendency more rarely after a failure.



Figure 2. Withdrawal-Oriented Coping in relation to Basic Hope in two kinds of difficulties: "loss" and "failure".

As Figure 3 shows the results indicate that after failure hope for success has a significant relation to frequent use of task-oriented strategy [ $F(1, 84)=13.09, p<0.01$ ]. The effect of basic hope in these kind of difficulties is more moderate: [ $F(1, 84)=3.57, p=0.06$ ]

As Figure 4 indicates, those with a higher basic hope in comparison to those with a lower

basic hope, are less frequently involved in tasks after loss [ $F(1, 84)=6.25, p<0.02$ ]. Effects of hope for success and interaction were not significant.

These results show that the role of basic hope and hope for success is different in the case of two kinds of life difficulties. As expected, basic hope is especially important in case of irreversible personal loss and hope for success is more important in case of a failure and difficulties in goal fulfilment. In case of a loss, stronger basic hope results in the ability to steadily withdraw attention and direct activity away from the lost object to other objects. However, in case of a failure, stronger basic hope enforces engagement in activity aimed at overcoming difficulties. In both cases stronger basic hope facilitates more adaptive reactions. Hope for success plays a role only in a situation of failure – it enforces stronger task involvement, which is an adaptive reaction in this case.

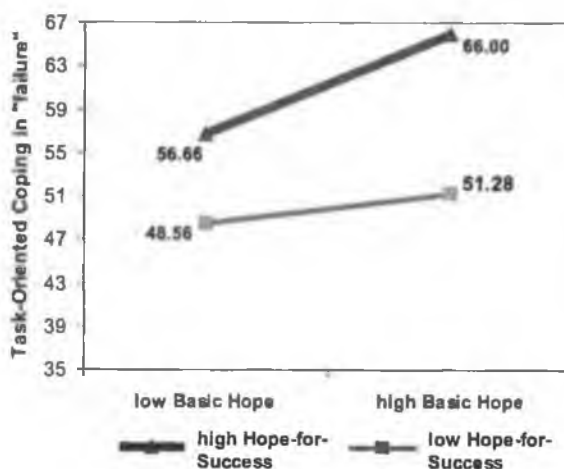


Figure 3. Task-Oriented Coping in relation to Basic Hope and Hope-for-Success in the "failure" kind of difficulties.

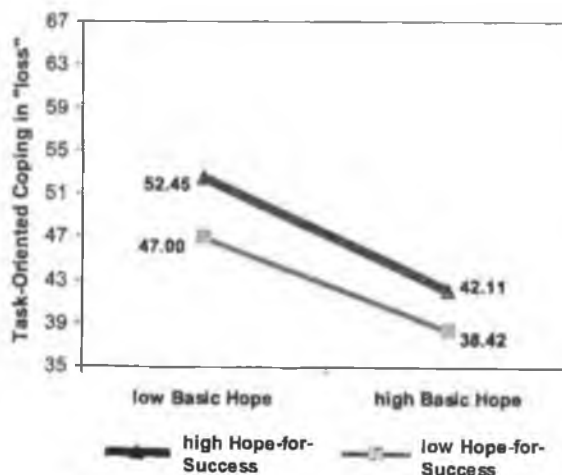


Figure 4. Task-Oriented Coping in relation to Basic Hope and Hope-for-Success in the "loss" kind of difficulties.

### Basic hope and rebuilding self-identity

Participants in our study (Bednarczyk, 2003) were young gays who revealed their sexual orientation and were under stress of rejection or negative reactions from their own family and friends. The level of their basic hope relating to the effectiveness of coping with this situation was observed. The effectiveness of coping was measured by using a questionnaire consisting of four scales: self-acceptance of one's own sexual orientation and gay identity, participation in social facilities and institutions (school, entertainment, hobbies, work), a feeling of personal comfort and safety and level of articulation of future life projects. The results indicate that higher basic hope relates to more effective coping (total index of effectiveness):  $F(1, 67)=7.33, p<0.01$ , especially to a higher self-acceptance of one's own sexual orientation;  $F(1, 67)=3.67, p<0.05$ , and to a higher participation in social facilities:  $F(1, 68)=4.70, p<0.05$ .

The subjects were also asked to evaluate the frequency of experiencing several emotional states, within the last two months. The names of emotions were listed and they consisted of positive and negative ones. As expected, basic hope correlates positively with the frequency of positive emotions [ $F(2, 61)=4.34, p<0.05$ ], and negatively with the frequency of negative emotional states [ $F(2, 61)=3.57, p<0.05$ ]. The results are presented in Figure 5.

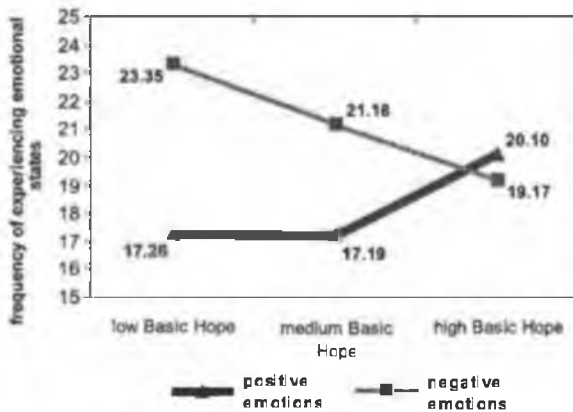


Figure 5. Frequency of positive and negative emotions in relation to the level of basic hope.

Higher basic hope also relates positively to the level of agreement with the statement: "I am satisfied with myself lately" [ $r=0.37, p<0.01$ ]. We interpret all these findings in terms of a self-identity crisis caused by the social rejection and attempts at re-building a new identity. It appeared that stronger basic hope gave the support for a successful process of such re-building.

### Basic hope and long-term progressive changes in personality

High school students filled-in BHI-12 and then they were asked to recollect the most difficult problem in their life that they could remember within the last two years (Konarzewska, 2003). Next, subjects filled in a 39-item questionnaire, which was the Polish enlarged version of the Stress-Related Growth Scale (Park, Cohen & Murch, 1996). This questionnaire consists of a description of attitudes towards others and themselves as well as personality competencies. Some of them are positive some negative. The first example is "My esteem of others feelings and believes". The task for the subject was to evaluate on a five-point scale if such an attitude or competency diminished or grew after the difficulties that had happened. The difference between the original American scale and our scale is that our scale helps a subject to concentrate on a concrete important difficulty in life and its consequences, whereas the American scale asks for a self-evaluation in an abstract context of difficulties in life. The results indicate a clear dependency of positive long-term outcomes of life difficulties on the level of basic hope. Those with stronger basic hope observed more constructive personality changes in themselves than their colleagues with weaker basic hope [ $F(3, 75)=2.97, p<0.03$ ; post hoc difference between extreme groups  $p<0.01$ ]. Data from another study suggests that basic hope is a more important factor in causing these positive answers to difficulties in life (measured by an abbreviated version of the above questionnaire) than optimism (Polish version of Carver and Schaier's LOT-R; Poprawa, Juczynski 2001) and hope for success (ADHS). It appeared that all three factors are positively related to the progressive changes but regression analyses showed that the influence of basic hope was dominant.

### Basic hope and coping with a challenge to self-identity

High school students with emotional and family problems participated in two weeks group therapy in a camp organized by a psychiatric hospital. For these people this kind of environment along with personal interaction created new experiences for them and created a difficult challenge to some aspects of their self-identity. We expected that basic hope would facilitate openness to such new experiences and therefore would lead to positive outcomes in psychotherapy. Participants filled in several questionnaires before and after the two week therapy. At the beginning they filled in BHI, and the Polish version of Carver and Schaier's LOT-R scale measuring optimism (Poprawa, Juczynski, 2001). Anova with basic

hope, hope for success and optimism as factors and attitudes towards own family as a dependent variable showed a significant effect in case of basic hope only [ $F(1, 15)=11.97, p < 0.01$ ]. As expected, stronger basic hope relates to a greater improvement in attitudes and emotions towards their own family life and family members. These attitudes were treated by the therapists as the main non-adaptive problem of participants and the main object of the therapy. Although this finding is preliminary, considering for example the complexity of the therapeutical process, it supports our hypothesis that basic hope may be a fundamental personality factor in openness to a new situation and in gaining profits from opportunities embedded within them.

#### *Personality consequences of the level of basic hope*

Basic hope allows one to re-build order in one's own life after severe loss and facilitates openness to new experiences and opportunities. It should result in such personality characteristics as a positive well-being, optimism and a tendency to have a positive emotional mood. In accordance with these expectations, the results indicate a positive correlation of basic hope with optimism measured by the Polish version of the LOT scale (Poprawa, Juczyński, 2001) [ $r$  between 0.37 and 0.51,  $p < 0.05$ ], with well-being measured by the Polish version of The Satisfaction Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larson, Griffin, 1985):  $r=0.44$ , with frequency of positive mood (Trzebińska, 2002):  $r=0.51, p < 0.05$ ; and with declared satisfaction with life domains and aspects of life (like family and professional life and financial situation (Trzebińska, 2000):  $r=0.41, p < 0.05$ .

Basic hope – as expected – appears to be positively related to such vision of the self which accentuates the ability of self control and the abilities to realize one's own goals. It correlates with a sense of internal control measured by the Polish questionnaire (Krasowicz, Kurzyp-Wojnarowska, 1990) based on the Internal-External Control Questionnaire by Rotter (1966) and the Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Questionnaire (Crandall, 1965): 0.44,  $p < 0.01$ . Basic hope also correlates with the Polish version of The Self-Efficacy Scale (Poprawa, Juczyński, 2001) based on Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977):  $r=0.22, p < 0.05$ .

In several studies the correlation of basic hope (BHI) with a belief in one's own success to realize goals (that is hope in Snyder's conceptualization: Snyder, 1991) was positive [ $r$  between 0.31 and 0.44,  $p < 0.05$ ], consequently a stronger correlation with the agency component of this factor (conviction in own will to realize goals) [ $r=0.49, p < 0.05$ ] than with the pathway component (belief in possessing the abilities to find the ways to

realize goals [ $r=20$  up to  $r=34$ ]. We have expected such data because belief in the strength of one's own will seems to be more general – and thus more related to the basic hope – than convictions about one's own specific competencies needed to implement the plans.

A stronger belief in a meaningful and positive world means more positive expectations of new experiences and new aspects of life. As a result, a person will be more encouraged to explore them. We expect a positive correlation of basic hope with openness to experience. As mentioned already BHI-12 correlates positively with the openness factor in NEO-FFI (Costa, McCrae, 1992) [ $r=34, p < 0.01$ ]. In fact, it is the strongest correlation with factors from Neo-FFI. Additionally we have found, that BHI correlates positively with openness to new interpersonal experiences and events among teenagers [ $r=0.26, p < 0.01$ ]. (Kwissa, 2003).

In opposition to this, it might be expected to find negative correlations of basic hope with non-adaptive characteristics of personality. BHI correlates negatively with anxiety measured by the Polish version of STAI (Spielberger, 1972; Wrześniewski, Sosnowski, 1987): trait subscale:  $r=-0.49, p < 0.01$ , and state subscale:  $r=-0.39, p < 0.01$ . Also, BHI-12 negatively correlates with somatic indicators of chronic anxiety (Trzebińska, 2004): people with weaker basic hope revealed much more somatic indicators of anxiety than persons with stronger basic hope [ $F(1, 86)=28.19, p < 0.01$ ].

Basic hope negatively relates with depression, but there is an interesting interaction of this factor with the self-narrative style (Sitnik, 2003). Self-narratives are understood as an individual's way of understanding personal experiences and personally relevant events: These are interpreted as histories. Data from several studies (Trzebiński, 2001) indicate that there are individual tendencies to understand self-related experiences and facts either within proactive or defensive histories. Within a proactive framework the self-story is organized around personal goal and ways of realizing it, whereas within the defensive framework the self-story is about the difficulties that happened and demand response. As Figure 6 indicates, there is an interaction of these two self-narrative tendencies and basic hope on the level of depression measured by the Becks' scale (Beck, 1961). The most depressive are people with a tendency towards the defensive understanding of their own life and at the same time with weaker basic hope (main effect of basic hope:  $F(1, 65)=9.77, p < 0.01$  and effect of interaction:  $F(1, 65)=6.23, p < 0.05$ ).

This finding suggests that strong basic hope may immunize a person against chronic depres-

sion independently from narrative styles. The depression results from weaker basic hope but especially when accompanied by the defensive style of self-understanding, when a person is much more concerned with real or possible difficulties than with own values and ideals and perspectives of their realization. It may be expected, that a defensive person thinks mainly about problems and hard situations and how to avoid or to overcome them. In this case, the level of basic hope may be strong and a cross-situational indicator of the possibility of doing well in a troublesome environment and thus an indicator of one's own future. Weak basic hope may become a chronic cause of depressive mode. In the case of a proactive person and at least in a known environment, own intentions and chances of their fulfillment may be more important in shaping the vision of their own future, than counting on the probability of having troubles.

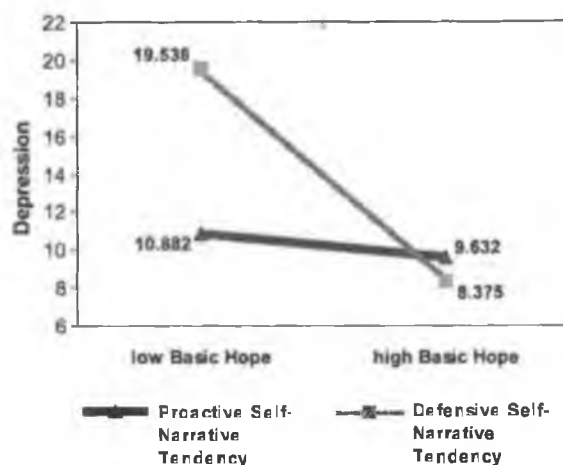


Figure. 6 Depression in relation to Basic Hope and Proactive or Defensive Self Narrative Tendencies.

## Discussion

Preliminary findings lead to several positive conclusions about the present measurement of the level of basic hope and – first of all – about functional autonomy and the importance of basic hope. The basic hope questionnaire satisfied internal and time reliability as well as the expected factorial structure. It has also satisfied its validity based on a diverse data. The findings are in accordance with the outlined conceptualization of basic hope. They suggest an important role for the level of basic hope as a condition of a positive approach to, and constructive long-term consequences of personal loss and trauma. Preliminary findings also suggest a positive role of basic hope in encouraging openness to new experiences, which may lead to personal growth. As Erikson suggested, basic hope is the first condition in the development of a healthy

personality (ego). These findings provide support for this intuition. They suggest that basic hope has positive consequences for a more stable characteristics of personality.

Basic hope on one hand and belief in one's own capabilities to secure positive future events and goal fulfillments (hope for success) on the other, are two fundamental psychological resources an individual may possess in coping with troubles and challenges. They play dominant roles in different life situations but sometimes they play them together as complementary to one another. The belief in himself or herself is the most important factor influencing a person's action when the person is a player in a known game. In such a case his or her private order of a given life domain is secure and failures and problems seem to be ones to overcome – if necessary competencies and aids are present. But when the private order is in threat or is broken up – strong enough basic hope seems to be the ultimate resource to be granted in order to start to build new order in life. Building a new order means learning something new and – hopefully – changing one's own hierarchy of values, as well as changing one's self-concept and concepts of other people. A constructive approach to personal loss and trauma as well as openness to new experiences are thus preconditions to personal growth. This idea is present in great classic theories of development, from Freud and Piaget to Erikson. Basic hope may be the necessary link between trouble, conflict, or a loss and psychological growth.

There are several interesting lines of research that may enlarge the theoretical spectrum of our conceptualization, as well as ways of measuring basic hope. How is basic hope formed and how it develops during first stage of personality formation? Despite Erikson's interest in this problem, until now there are no advanced works – theoretical nor empirical – about these developmental processes. However, the development of a child's earliest models of the world is addressed in recent studies by cognitive and developmental psychologists (Gelman & Wellman, 1991; Haman, 2002; Keil, 1989; Keil & Wilson, 2000) and this background may help to begin a systematic study on the antecedents and consequences of the development of basic hope in children. This kind of research would require other measurements of the level of basic hope than a questionnaire. Incidentally, this necessity may prompt the development of more diversified techniques of studying basic hope in adults.

Another interesting objects of inquiry are mechanisms of changes in basic hope level in adulthood. It may be expected that dramatic experiences of breaking up the old order and



successfully building new order in one's personal life may strengthen the basic hope. This successful event may be a result of the own efforts of a person who had lost something valuable, but also the result of help from others. Meeting a person who, despite a loss, expresses strong basic hope – in both behavior and emotions – is another experience that strengthens the basic hope. On the other hand there are dramatic experiences that may weaken or even disrupt basic hope. It includes a process of social anomie (Durkheim, 1951) when moral norms, most crucial values and moral authorities lose their obviousness and therefore their power and the social organization is thrown into disarray.

## References

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