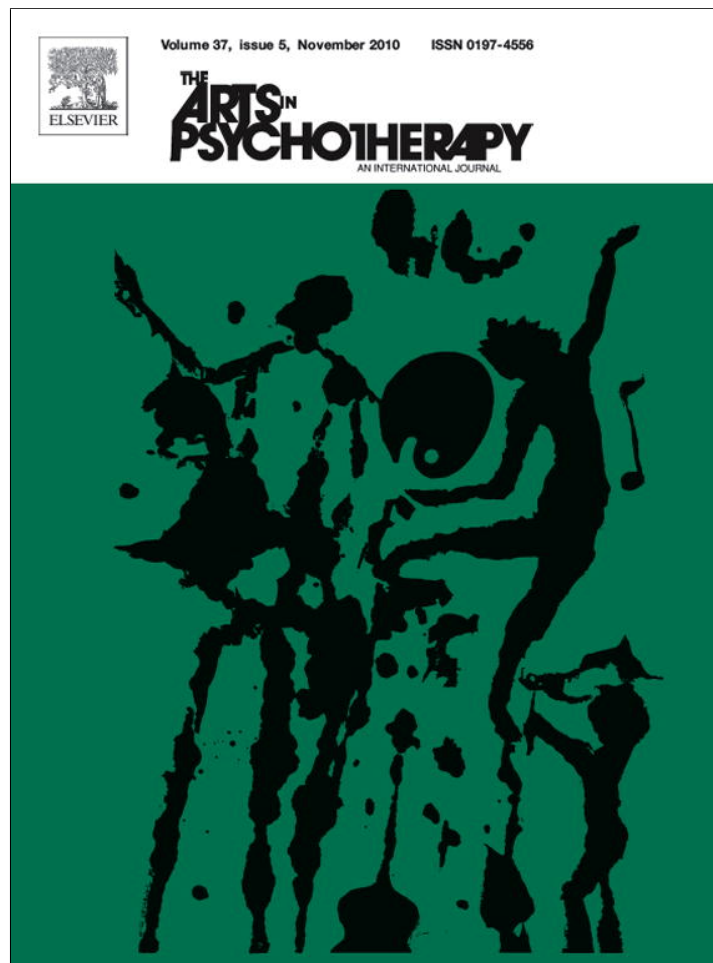


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The Arts in Psychotherapy



The role of collective symbols as enhancing resilience in children's art

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ABSTRACT

This paper contributes to understanding the experience of forced relocation for children, and offers a new reading of their art, adding concepts of resilience to art analyses, and also contextualizing drawing assessment within a cultural perspective.

Forced relocation of people from their homes due to changes in borders, war or natural disasters has been recognized in the literature as a stressor which has affected communities throughout the world. However, the responses of latency-aged children to these stressors have not been sufficiently addressed. In an attempt to fill that gap, this article presents a phenomenological and diagnostic analysis of drawings made by Israeli children aged 7–9 who were evacuated from localities in the Gaza strip area. The drawings indicate that the experience of forced relocation remained a significant one for the children, even 2 years after the event. The children's drawings reveal the difficulties they experienced, as well as the coping strategies that they used to work through the experience and adjust to the situation. The children included numerous ideological statements in their drawings, which evidently reflect an attempt to understand the meaning of the relocation, and emphasize their group affiliation. As a result, this paper demonstrates that it is important to include the components of ideology, community, and family in evaluations of children's art work in order to evaluate children's constructive coping.

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Introduction

Art, a natural form of self expression for children, is often used as a method of assessment and also of intervention in potentially traumatic situations such as relocation, immigration, war, and natural disaster (Hass-Cohen, 2003; Klingman, Koenigsfield, & Markman, 1987; Mallay, 2002). Art assessment, in the context of Western developmental norms, is based on projective, developmental and phenomenological understandings of children's drawings. However, both trauma and resilience in the context of poverty, war or dislocation, most often affect children from Non-Western, religious or collective cultures, which could make these assessment methods less culturally relevant. For example, children's pictures often contain collective symbols that according to westernized norms of child art analyses are considered stereotypes or 'escapes' from personal pain, rather than manifestations of symbols that provide collective resilience (Furth, 1998; Rubin, 2001; Silver, 2001; Wilson, 2001). This paper will aim to examine this issue, through artwork of dislocated children from an extreme right wing ideological religious group in Israel that underwent forced relocation by the Israeli government in the Gaza strip in 2005. This

occurred in the context of extreme political conflict with the state as well as with the surrounding Palestinian authority. The aim of this research is to provide a theoretical model for understanding the character and function of collective, religious and ideological symbols that are prevalent in these children's art. This analysis will demonstrate how the children from this extreme collective religious community engage in a complex integration, dialoging between collective symbols on the level of content, and individual manifestations of stress, on the level of composition. This creates a symbolic forum within which to express both stress and resilience. Collective or generalized symbols will be shown to help children from collective religious cultures to enhance their resilience, and thus to have the strength to express more painful and individual traumatic memories through the composition of these symbols.

Literature survey

Forced relocation

Forced relocation is defined in the literature as a way of involuntarily moving a population from familiar surroundings to a new environment. The move usually involves an overall change in living conditions, such as place of residence, workplace, and social life, which can affect the mental and physical health of individuals (Ryff & Essex, 1992). The experience of forced relocation is a complex one, which involves emotional aspects such as loss of one's

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home, community, and familiar surroundings. Forced relocation also upsets the individual's sense of family stability and sense of meaning in life. In addition, there are instrumental challenges such as organizing a struggle and finding a new home, job, or occupation, as well as cognitive challenges related to planning ahead and visualizing the future (Shamai & Lev, 1999).

It is accepted to view forced relocation as a traumatic experience because it is usually accompanied by a sharp, serious disruptions of life routine: it entails intensive losses, and by definition the evacuee has no choice or control over the situation (Hobfoll, 2001; Hobfoll, Dunaboo, & Monnier, 1995). Research findings have revealed a diverse range of emotional and psychological responses to forced relocation, including pain, mourning, anger, anxiety, adjustment difficulties, depression, marital and family problems, loss of confidence in one's achievements and abilities, and a sense of uncertainty about the future (Brown & Perkins, 1992; David, Mellman, & Mendoza, 1996). Those responses have been found among refugees who have lost their homes in war and political revolutions (Silove, 2000). In addition, forced relocation arouses questions about the values as well as feelings of anger and betrayal towards the governmental forces that are responsible for the process (Gerrity & Steinglass, 2003).

The type of forced relocation experienced by Gush Katif specifically, is thus defined by the literature as potentially traumatic on the level of the length and violence of the political struggle around the enforced relocation (Billig, Kohn, & Levav, 2006; Hall et al., 2008). Within the Gush Katif area, one in five adults was found to suffer from post-traumatic symptoms (Nuttman-Shwartz, 2008; Nuttman-Shwartz & Dekel, 2007). Research literature on this group indicates that high levels of psychological stress had been observed among the residents before and after the evacuation (Nuttman-Shwartz, 2008; Sagy, 2005). High dropout rates from the education system among children and youth were also found (Prime Minister's Office/SELA, 2006).

Children and forced relocation

Children perceive all relocation as a significant life event which is potentially traumatic. They have difficulty imagining how their lives will change after the move, and feelings of uncertainty are aroused by questions such as: Where are they going live? Will they have friends? Will the other children like them? How will they adjust in school? Relocation is also accompanied by the loss of familiar objects such as buildings, neighborhood surroundings, and other aspects that were part of the children's former home. The potential damage to children's functioning focuses on four areas: mental health, social adjustment, self-image, and scholastic achievement. Emotional responses to relocation vary in accordance with the child's personality structure, as well as in accordance with the family's response to the relocation and whether the relocation was forced or voluntary. Agmon (1990) indicated that when relocation has been forced on children or adolescents, they have difficulty coping with the move. Those responses are related to separation, as well as to the process of mourning the loss of familiar objects such as friends, culture, and landscapes. Latency-age children are concerned about moving to a new school, and can be left without power to cope with many changes (Brett, 1982). In the first years of elementary school, anxieties and fears are aroused by exposure to new situations. Children aged 7–9 were found to be the most vulnerable to anxiety and apprehension, particularly in response to direct, concrete fears (Muris et al., 2000). Whereas children in normal situations are given an opportunity to move gradually from insulated surroundings to a new social environment, in situations of forced relocation latency-age children might develop existential anxiety, avoidance, resistant behavior, and a sense of loneliness due to introversion and the lack of desire for parental involvement.

These responses are often transmitted by the parents, and are exacerbated by the exposure to sights and images that are hard to absorb (such as parents and siblings fighting with the police) and, in many cases, by the parents' preoccupation. The findings of a study conducted among children who were evacuated from their homes during a period of war have revealed higher levels of stress and anxiety among those children in comparison with children who were not evacuated (Maksimovic, Kocijancic, Backovic, Ille, & Paunovic, 2005). These problems intensify among children who had been evacuated without family members (Shacham & Lahad, 2004). Moreover, when experiences of separation from home are combined with other separations that are common at latency age, stress and anxiety reactions increase (Weems & Costa, 2005). Shacham and Lahad (2004) found that when the northern region of Israel was under attack, children aged 9 through 12 showed high levels of psychological stress responses compared with those aged 6 through 9 and adolescents (aged 12 and over). In addition, the researchers found that the older the children were, the more they preferred to stay in their place of residence despite the security threat. This was due to the importance that adolescents attribute to their social environment.

The Gush Katif population and forced relocation

The Gush Katif community in Israel (more specific settlements will not be named, so as to maintain privacy), is an example of a collective minority community in which Jewish – (orthodox and extreme Zionist ideologies) are dominant. The refusal of this group to leave their communities due to political demands created much debate and overall hostility towards them in Israel. In the summer of 2005 the Israeli government forcefully relocated Israeli settlements in Gaza as part of the agreement with Palestine. This was led by the Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and took eight days, amid much national controversy (Nuttman-Shwartz, 2008). People were relocated in the context of physical fights with police and the Israeli army, in an effort to resist the relocation. The children relocated took part in their parent's violent resistance (including being forcibly moved into police cars). After the relocation the families were moved to caravans within Israeli territory until more permanent solutions could be found for them (Ryff et al., 1992).

Collective versus individualistic cultures

The children in this research are from a religious and extremist group within Israel, characterized by very large families and religious beliefs, that are defined as shared history, practices, beliefs and values of a racial, regional, or religious group of people. Sue (1996) defines collective cultures, as those in which the social and ideological context is inherent to individual identity – as described by Cole as the “connected whole that gives coherence to its parts” (Cole, 1996, p. 135). Hierarchies and sources of support include belief in God, help of religious leaders, and community or familial systems: This is as compared to individualistic cultures, where individuation, personal achievements and self realization are the cultural ideals. This often includes separation from the family of origin, and different belief systems from parents (Dwairy, 2004; Sue, 1996).

Within collective cultures children, rather than being a separate peer group as in individualistic cultures, are active parts of the family and of the community, and are expected to help with the work and overall management of the family. Older children are often responsible for their siblings. More individualistic cultures tend to segregate children's learning environments as compared to cultures that encourage learning through proximity to adults and by observing adult behavior, and participating in it (Jayanthi, 2002; Sue, 1996).

According to the stress-buffering model, close and collective communities offer more social support for adults in times of stress that enhance wellbeing and coping, while individualistic cultures offer more support in terms of self actualization.

Cultural symbols

All types of cultures maintain themselves through common belief systems often organized around a set of symbols that represent this, and that are transmitted from generation to generation. Cambell describes how lived experiences become meaningful and gain coherent narratives, when described or reflected back through symbolic productions. Wolfgang (2005) defines symbols as addressing the specific needs of people in specific times and then being exchanged for new symbols. Symbols within the context of a specific culture, help to heal and fortify the individual through reconnecting him to the universal as well as base values of his society that are manifested in the symbols (Devi, 1984; Edwards, 2001; Wolfgang, 2006). Indeed, there is neurological evidence that art and symbolization processes neurologically connect between mind, body, and emotions, and enable an indirect symbolic space within which to create more enabling narratives of traumatic events, thus counteracting symptoms of trauma and PTSD (Sarid & Huss, in press). For example, Riley and Malchiody (1994) point to the use of peer – group symbols by adolescents as a strategy to create individuation from adults in western society. Rogers describes the use of the cross as a fortifying symbol for Christian believers. Padulo describes using archetypes to help anorexic clients find metaphors for coping and strength, as anorexia is itself a culturally constructed illness. Moyra points to the use of stereotypical symbols by clients as a way to create enough safety to undergo a transformative process. Flitspic found symbols of homes helpful as ways to enable mourning the loss of home with Bosnian refugees. Kiligman et al. pointed to the use of graffiti in Israel after the assassination of the Prime Minister Rabin in Israel as a collective symbol making that helped the country overcome their shock and trauma. The peace symbol was constantly repeated, holding on to the element of hope for peace, felt to be lost with Rabin's death.

However, symbols can also be conceptualized as including universal elements that are common to all cultures. This includes archetypes, manifested in different content but similar compositions, such as the Mandela shape (Jung, 1974). This is the basis of diagnostic tests that assume universal meanings to symbols as shown in the following sets of assessments.

Methods of child art analyses

Art is an accepted medium for children to express situations of stress and trauma through visual images, especially when they have difficulty verbalizing those situations (Betinsky, 1995; Malchiody, 1998; Weimar, 2005). Art can be used from both a diagnostic and a phenomenological perspective to understand children's experiences of traumatic situations. Rendering stressors-stress reactions, and coping (Huss, 2010). Based on compositional elements of universal symbols, children's art can show levels of development, attitudes and projected unconscious emotions (Betinsky, 1995; Burns, 1987; Malchiody & Riley, 1996). The interpretation of the art is based on statistical data. For example, Milton found a statistically significant larger percentage of omissions of body parts, encapsulations, and distractions, such as butterflies and flying birds, in pictures of sexually molested children, together with overall poor compositional integration, heavy shading, asymmetry, slanting, figures, and writing within a picture (Burns, 1987; Furth, 1998; Silver, 2001; Wilson, 2001).

However, as stated above, diagnostic art literature focuses on pathology and signs of stress, within a universal frame, that may

omit culturally contextualized signs of resilience and coping within symbol use). Phenomenological art assessment understands the meaning children attribute to their art in the contexts of specific cultural realities (Malchiody & Riley, 1996). Thus, combining both the phenomenological, diagnostic, and cultural perspectives for understanding children's art may enable a more encompassing understanding of the art as accessing stressors, stress, but also strengths of children (Huss & Cwikel, 2008; Huss, Sarid, & Cwikel, 2010; Mallay, 2002). This is the method used in this research, as described in the methods section below.

Research method

Research field

The participants were a single case study of 12 children (9 girls and 3 boys) aged 7–9, who had been evacuated from their homes in the Gaza area (see above section on Gush Katif relocation in Section "Literature survey") and moved to permanent housing with all of the members in their community. The children belonged to the national religious movement, and were enrolled in elementary schools in their locality of residence. Their parents had asked them whether they would agree to meet with the researchers, so that the meetings were held with the children's consent. The group did not include children who had been injured in acts of terror while they had been living in the Gush Katif area. In addition, the parents did not report that the children had any problems functioning before or after the evacuation.

A single case design was used as the analyses is qualitative, based on thematic and interpretive analyses. Qualitative single cases are cited as helpful for preliminary thematic understanding of new areas of research (Hubberman & Miles, 2002, chap. 16).

Sampling procedure

Participants were identified through telephone conversations with the children's parents (mainly with the mothers). In the conversations, the researchers introduced themselves and gave a general explanation about the study and its goals. After the parents agreed in principle to let their children participate, the researchers mailed them a page with a written explanation about the study, and the parents were requested to ask their children whether they would meet with the investigators. About 2 weeks after that, the researchers contacted the parents again in order to arrange meetings with the children. The meetings were held in the classroom after school hours, with groups of 2–4 children. At the end of the meetings, the children were given sweets as a reward for their cooperation. A mother from the group was present at all of the meetings so as to make the situation more familiar for the participants.

Research instrument

The instrument used in the present study was a home drawing. Home drawings are one of the most prevalent types of drawings in children's art. The home is cited as symbolizing a potentially safe (or unsafe) haven for children, where they can experience acceptance, love, and human warmth, or the lack of it (Burns, 1987; Furth, 2002; Malchiody, 1998). As such, the way that it is drawn, and the narrative that it elicits can describe the levels of trust or lack of trust that the child has developed in relation to his immediate physical and emotional environment (Burns, 1987; Dovey, 1985).

Houses are considered to represent an image of the self to the world (Furth, 2002; Jung, 1974; Malchiody, 1998). In the context to this study, it enabled the children to define home as a personal house, or as their settlement ("home" and "house" are the same

word in Hebrew). It also enabled them to choose whether to draw their present home, after being relocated, or their former home in the Gush Katif area (see ethical considerations).

Data collection

Three drawing meetings were held with the participants. At the beginning of each meeting the mother of one child was present in order to ensure that the participants experienced a safe and familiar environment. The assumption was that within a collective culture and a small village, all parents are familiar figures representing the dominant culture as compared to the external researcher. The researcher, a trained social worker, was able to assess the children's reactions to the specific mother chosen, and would have discounted her if she arose fear or antagonism in the children.

The children were asked to draw a picture of their home. It was clarified to them that they could draw any home they wished: their home in Gush Katif, or their present home. We wanted to see if they were still concerned with their old homes, or with their new homes, and we also hoped that this would enable them to choose their current homes if the old homes were too traumatic to remember. The children were also asked to choose the type of paper and implement they wished to use for their drawings. They worked on the drawings for 30–40 min. When they finished, they told a story about the picture that was taped and transcript:

Data sources

The research data sources were thus the photographed art work, the Tran scripted explanations and stories of children about the art work, and the observational diary of the art process by the researcher.

Analytical method

The drawings firstly underwent analyses on the level of specific symbols, utilizing both social thematic analyses that aimed to understand the symbols within their specific context (Eisner, 1997; Pink & Kurti, 2004). Additionally, psychological interpretive theories that assess psychological functioning through compositional and stylistic elements were used (Furth, 2002). The second stage of analyses included re-situating the symbols within the overall composition of the art work (Creswell, 1997) and is based on and validated by the children's own stories of the picture as a whole.

Validity

The analysis was conducted by three different researchers: one was from the research team, and two were external researchers. At first each researcher catalogued the drawings separately; afterwards, the three researchers catalogued the drawings together in order to enhance the validity of their decisions.

The different levels of interpretation, both diagnostic and interpretive, helped to triangulate the findings and create internal validity. Additionally, a peer group observed and analyzed the pictures (Hubberman & Miles, 2002, chap. 16).

Ethical considerations

In light of the participants' age, the parents gave their written consent for their children to participate in the study, after the goals and procedures of the study were explained to them. All of the parents signed an informed consent form. In addition, to facilitate matters for the children and to ensure that the interviews would be normative, the meetings were held in small groups, with a parent present. Neither the parents nor the investigator, who is

a professional practitioner, reported any change in the children's behavior following the interviews. Nonetheless, the parents were given a telephone number to contact for advice and assistance if needed. To maintain the children's privacy and anonymity, their personal details were not disclosed, and eliminated from the visual and verbal data presented in the article.

Data presentation and discussion

The following symbols were prevalent in the drawings, and as stated in the analyses, will be understood through socially contextualized as well as psychological theoretical prisms.

Houses

Interestingly, all of the children chose to draw their former houses – in the Gush settlement before deportation, although they were asked to draw 'a house' and many wrote next to the houses, slogans such as "*Gush katif – this, is my house 'forever'*". In other words, the children defined their former house as transcending the present, and as becoming a symbolic or spiritual rather than specific house. When asked about this, a child explained "*Gush katif is a way of being, it's not a place, or a specific house, it's in our hearts. . .*". Similarly, some children chose to draw their 'home' as the whole settlement rather than a specific house, transcending individual spaces and families. Additionally, even those that chose to draw single houses drew them with less detail than the community areas outside of the house.

A psychological explanation for the lack of specific houses could be that the personal house was too upsetting to remember, and so it was easier to draw the general settlement. The literature states that the house is a projection of the self (see Section "Literature survey"). In that case, then these houses or communities portray a collective sense of self (Dwairy, 2004; Sue, 1996). The house – as home – or as village – is transcendent of concrete time and place and of a nuclear house or family. This is opposed to Western conceptions of children as focused on the concrete present and nuclear family (Burns, 1987). This depiction of a house as a real but also transcendent home, is compatible with religious art symbols, for example depictions of Jerusalem as an ideal and spiritual home (Hansen, 2001; Henrich & Shahar, 2008; Irving, 1997; Pink & Kurti, 2004).

This paper suggests that both the social and psychological analyses are not exclusive but complimentary. The drawing of a collective transcendent community may give the strength to deal with the more personal stress of loss of a specific house in the context of dislocation and political conflict (Eisner, 1997; Emmerson & Smith, 2000).

Palm trees: do in fact grow in the desert area where Gush Katif is located, and they have become a symbol for the settlers of a 'natural' element that is dug up and relocated.

From a social thematic perspective, the palm tree was utilized as a slogan of political resistance by this specific minority group of extreme settlers. For the children, this is an accepted symbol of their community struggle. Palm trees were also used as a symbol in early Zionist art to romanticize the oriental elements of Israel as opposed to the Diaspora (Killigman et al., 2000).

From a psychological interpretive perspective, according to diagnostic art analyses, the tree constitutes a symbol of self, and its trunk, roots, and branches and the relationship between these different parts, are analyzed as different parts of the psyche (Burns, 1987; Furth, 2002). In these pictures, some palm trees were indeed very sharp and spiky, and some were small, like 'child' trees (see last analyses).

Star of David in flag of Israel

A recurring symbol in the children's pictures is the flag of Israel with its 'Star of David' standing on a pole and planted into the ground, similar to a tree. This turns the national symbol into a 'natural' element inherent to this specific part of the land, a stand concurrent with this extremist group's ideology that merges national and natural symbols. From a psychological interpretive stand, it's similarity to a tree, turns it into a symbol of self, merged with national and religious identity.

The sun

From a social thematic stand, the sun is a strong sensory memory of the hot desert area of the settlements. Some children drew a Star of David instead of the sun. From a psychological interpretive stand, both sun and Star of David is a Mandela form, symbolizing psychological wholeness, and is similar to the round sun form found in children's pictures, which is interpreted as a protective mother-symbol (Jung, 1974; Silver, 2001). The children who did draw suns, drew sharp and threatening rays, that seem to express both fear, or anger (Burns, 1987; Furth, 2002; Jung, 1964).

The sea and rolling hills and grass

Another theme that arose from the children's drawings was an idyllic picture of the sea peeping through green hills with small red topped houses on them. The Gush settlements were indeed situated by the sea, pointing to a specific sensory memory, however, from a social thematic perspective, the idealization of nature within religious art, symbolizes infinity, spirituality, and a connection to positive emotions (Irving, 1997; Pink & Kurti, 2004). A child stated of one of these sea pictures that he had drawn, p – "here is a picture of the most beautiful place in the world."

Black sea gulls

Black sea gulls do live next to the sea in this area, and so may be part of the children's concrete memory. At the same time, from a psychological interpretive stand, black birds, as well as other black and intense activity in the sky area (such as heavy black clouds or rain) are understood as expressions of stress or the anger that stress creates (Furth, 2002; Silver, 2001). One child stated, "the birds are scary, but they are far away..." In this particular case, from a social thematic perspective, the sharp pointed birds are

also visually similar to the missiles that regularly fell from the sky onto the settlers from Palestine.

Written slogans

Many of the pictures included written slogans of sentences used in the communities political struggle, such as *Gush Katif is my home* or "*Gush Katif forever*", rather than peer related symbols, such as logo's or hearts or cultural heroes. From a social thematic perspective, it seems that these children chose their parent's political struggle as their cultural hero-focus (Malchiodi, 1993). The slogans can be likened in their style to graffiti, which is typically a subversive message of a resistant minority – as this group is in Israel. Political art uses writing as an inherent part of the content that is interchangeable in meaning with visual symbols. This is demonstrated in the example of the word "home" juxtaposed with a small picture of a house in the children's pictures. Similarly, from a psychological interpretive perspective, writing is a sign of the drawer not being confident of being understood or heard (Burns, 1987; Furth, 2002; Jung, 1964). Religious art uses words and letters as symbols holding mystical and transformative power in themselves. The above slogans can be seen as constituting such a psychological talisman for the children, providing resilience through an overall meta-narrative (Folkman, 1997). This is reflected in one child's explanation

"I always draw a political slogan on all of my pictures; it gives me a good feeling. . ."

Integrative analyses of whole pictures

The second analyses, as stated above, will relocate the symbols into specific pictures, demonstrating how the children utilize the social as well as psychological meanings of the symbols to synergistically enhance resilience while expressing stress. This integrative analyses is based on, and validated by, the children's own explanations' of their drawings.

Example 1. In the above picture (Fig. 1), the child explained his picture saying "*this is a picture of my home – gush katif, look how beautiful it is!*" However, although on the level of content an idyllic sea view is depicted, on the level of composition the settlement is made up small black shaded houses, with large pointed black birds that seem to 'fall' on the settlement (like missiles) from the sky. One interpretation of the gap between content and compositional levels is that the symbolic idyllic level of content as collective symbols,



Fig. 1. Central symbols.



Fig. 2. Black houses and birds with an ideal sea view.

provides the child with enough resilience to express his fear in the stylistic rendering of these symbols.

Example 2. In the following picture (Fig. 2) we see that a specific mother is drawn at the window of her house. She is wearing an orange kerchief (the color that officially symbolizes the group's political struggle). Thus, the mother is specific, but is also "boosted" by the color of her ideology. This renders her as both a private mother and also a collective symbol. The girl who drew this said of her picture while drawing it "I am trying to draw my mother but I can't manage to draw her, because t when my mother remembers gush katif she cries.". The mother, who – herself is still in high stress, was 'strengthened' by her daughter with a collective symbol of a kerchief in the color orange. Once she was bolstered by a collective symbol, the child could then describe her mother's grief. Additional bolsters are the shelter-room of the house *i* (the red door) giving physical protection, and the slogan written above the house, that says "Gush katif for ever" protecting both mother and child. To summarize, by combining both social thematic and psychological interpretive analyses, we can understand that the child used her collective symbols to actively protect her mother, her own personal protector (who, as is typical of traumatic situations, is not strong enough to protect her daughter at present, and cries). She protects her mother with collective symbols, so that her mother can protect her – and thus, the collective symbols enhance her own sense of resilience.

Example 3. Within the next picture (Fig. 3) we see three different types of trees: One palm tree, one "flag tree" (see above) on one side of the house, and two personal trees that are cut of by the edge of the page. The trees frame the picture; The child explained his



Fig. 3. A mother wearing an orange kerchief. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of the article.)



Fig. 4. Cut off trees protected by flags and palm trees.

picture through a story. "Once there was a boy called Michael, and he heard children talking behind his house that the government will relocate his settlement and he asked his parents in the evening and they said that yes – this is true – and that we must pray that it won't happen. A few days later soldiers came – lots of soldiers in big groups, they slowly got closer to our houses, and they spoke to my parents quickly, and my parents started crying. . ."

Based on a psychological interpretive stand, the two compositionally "cut off" trees express anxiety, and thus could be understood as symbols of the crying parents in the child's story of the picture (Burns, 1987; Furth, 2002). However, these trees are each proximal to a child-sized planted "flag tree" and a palm tree, both collective symbols of the political struggle. Again, it seems that these collective symbols are positioned by the cut of trees to protect them. Thus, even if the palm tree is a small 'child' palm tree, it brings protection through being a collective symbol, to the half tree, or "crying" parents (Fig. 4).

Example 4. In the following picture (Fig. 5), the color orange permeates the whole background, although it is not a realistic background color. This is discrepant with the child's developmental level manifested in the realistic rendering of the contents. She explained her picture:

"Once there was a boy called Yair and he lived with his family in the Gush, he had a strange feeling, one day, where he heard they would be sent from their homes, he tried to imagine how it would feel, – he asked if only their family would be sent away, and his mother



Fig. 5. The color orange as a political protection. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of the article.)

explained that no, they would all go to a big demonstration soon – so we demonstrated together, all the families.

We see by the narrative that these parents provide political action as a solution to the problems. Indeed, in the picture, the orange background (the official color of the political struggle of Gush Katif) is the background. Similarly, within the 'realistic' context of the picture, protective collective symbols are prevalent, such as an Israeli "flag-tree" is planted, and a sun drawn as a blue Star of David. Compositionally, we see manifestations of stress according to the above diagnostic literature, such as the two trees with bent trunks, falling fruit, and potholes. Thus, the child utilizes the symbols of the collective ideology as a way of enhancing resilience in a high stress situation such as forced relocation.

Conclusion

This paper outlined a typology of collective symbols, which included, flags, trees, sea, birds, the color orange, and slogans. These were understood within their social context as expressions of reality, but also symbols of the collective ideology.

Signs of stress were shown within the compositional format of these symbols, such as broken trees, pot holes, sharp shapes, shading, and encapsulation.

In the second analyses, when the symbols were relocated into their pictures, the collective meanings of the symbols were shown to protect the children from the very stress that the symbols manifested within the symbols. To elaborate, the interaction of a collective symbol on the level of content, and an expression of stress on the level of composition, enabled the children to express both stress and resilience in a synergetic manner within the context of relocation in a collective and high-ideology society (Huss, 2009; Huss et al., 2010). Different strategies or methods of integrating the stress and the resilience were identified, such as:

- Composition versus content (an idyllic scene rendered with black shaded houses and large black birds).
- Proximity of stressors next to collective protectors ("personal" and broken or cut off trees next to "collective" palm trees or flag-trees).
- Use of color as a metonym of a collective symbol (such as providing the mother with an orange kerchief).
- Use of non-realistic collective symbols in place of realistic elements (such as coloring a background orange or drawing a flag as a tree).
- Swapping a personal symbol for a political symbol (such as using a Star of David instead of a sun).

Through composition, proximity, integration or juxtaposition the children 'strengthen' stressful manifestations with the help of collective ideology, to create a transitional space in which both stress and resilience can interact and heal them.

This has implications for assessing resiliency in the context of cultural symbols, as well as, assessing stress factors in children's drawings (Folkman, 1997; Henrich & Shahar, 2008; Masten, 2001; Saleebay, 1996).

Another implication is appreciating the power of spiritual or abstract concepts for children from collective cultures, as a form of resilience, just like adults. This is in spite of being at a more concrete stage of development (Hansen, 2001; Malchiodi, 1993). In other words, the concept of childhood must also be understood within a social context: While western concepts of childhood aim to separate children from extreme adult ideology and to let them develop as individuals, this paper shows how children also derive strength from collective groups, that help them in times of trauma.

A methodological implication is the importance of multiple analyses of children's drawings, through both a psychological, but also socially contextualized prism so as to access the interrelationship between stress and coping (Huss, 2009).

Limitations of this paper are its single case study frame. Further research could evaluate similar groups of dislocated children in different stress contexts, so as to validate and expand the direction of this study.

Its contribution, is a preliminary theoretical model for utilizing collective symbols within children's art from a multiple theoretical perspective, to assess stress, but also resilience, and to understand more complexly the strategies that children use to integrate the two (Brown, 2008).

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