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The Experience of Forced Relocation as Expressed in Children's Drawings

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Abstract 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 drawings indicate that with the passage of time their perceptions of the evacuation were not traumatic. The main coping strategies reflected in the children's drawings are defense and distancing mechanisms, as well as family and community support. In addition, 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, it is important to include the components of ideology, community, and family in evaluations and psychosocial interventions in order to promote the children's constructive coping.

Introduction

Forced relocation means 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 and Essex 1992). It is accepted to view forced relocation as an experience of uprooting. It entails extensive losses, and the evacuee has no choice or control over the situation (Hall et al. 2008; Nuttman-Shwartz 2008). Lev (1995) claimed that forced relocation resulting from government pressure is especially difficult to cope with, because it involves the transfer of land to another political entity. In that situation, people are more reluctant to leave their homes and benefit less from formal and informal support. 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 and Perkins 1992; David et al. 1996). Those responses have been found among refugees who have lost their homes in war or political revolutions (Silove 2000), and are relevant to other displaced populations (Hall et al. 2008). In addition, whether forced relocation aims to save lives or is a result of national political conflict, it raises questions about values

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as well as feelings of anger and betrayal toward the governmental forces that are responsible for the process (Gerrity and Steinglass 2003; Lev 1995; Nuttman-Shwartz 2008).

In Israel, there were two political relocations. The first one was the evacuation of the Sinai Peninsula in 1982, when about 4,300 residents were relocated from the homes as part of the peace accords with Egypt. The second one was the evacuation of the Gush Katif settlements in the Gaza Strip and the settlements in northern Samaria in 2005. The findings of studies about the evacuation of the Sinai Peninsula support the argument that uprooting citizens from their homes can severely undermine their sense of security and protection, and that it can have long-term implications. The responses of the evacuees included stress, anxiety, physical and mental illness, and a sense of alienation and bitterness toward the establishment and Israeli society in general (see, for example, Tobiana et al. 1988).

The forced relocation from Gush Katif, which was examined in the present study, included about 8,000 residents. After being evacuated from their homes, the residents were relocated to temporary caravan sites that had been hastily prepared until permanent housing accommodations were built for them. As such, the relocation had certain specific characteristics that could increase the potential for crisis. The residents of the Gush Katif had been living in the area for many years. They had been threatened by acts of enemy hostility, but were highly motivated by the ideology of settling the land of Israel. Most of the children and adolescents had been born there, and felt a strong sense of belonging to the area (Sagy 2005). During the months preceding the evacuation, the residents of Gush Katif had initiated an intensive struggle against the disengagement plan. Although their struggle strengthened the sense of solidarity and cohesion within their community, they became a controversial minority group and were isolated from the mainstream of Israeli society (Nuttman-Shwartz 2008). Research literature on the topic indicates that high levels of psychological stress had been observed among the residents before and after the evacuation (Billig et al. 2006; Hall et al. 2008; Nuttman-Shwartz 2008; Weimar 2005) and high dropout rates from the education system among children and youth (Prime Minister's Office/SELA 2006).

Children, Forced Relocation, Coping, and Stress Reactions

Children experience many different types of uprooting: moving to a new neighborhood, forced relocation, evacuation, and escape from disasters.

Of course, the level of danger involved, as well as the social and familial context of the relocation and the sensitivities of the specific child will influence the overall experience of relocation. Children perceive relocation as a significant life event which is potentially traumatic. They have difficulty imagining how their lives will be after the move, and feelings of uncertainty are aroused by questions such as: where are they going live? Will they have friends? Will 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 (Edwards and Steinglass 2001; Fisher 1988). The potential damage to children's functioning focuses on four areas: mental health, social adjustment, self-image, and scholastic achievement. Emotional responses to relocation were also influenced by the child's personality structure, as well as by the family's response to the relocation, and by whether the move was forced or voluntary. Agmon (1990) indicated that when relocation has been forced on children or adolescents, they have difficulty coping with it. 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. In the initial years of elementary school, anxieties and fears are aroused by exposure to new situations. Researchers have found that children aged 7–9 are the most vulnerable to anxiety and apprehension, particularly in response to direct, concrete fears (Muris et al. 2000). In normal situations, children are given an opportunity to move gradually from insulated surroundings to a new social environment. However, in situations of relocation—and particularly in the case of forced relocation—latency-age children might develop existential anxiety, avoidance, resistant behavior, and a sense of loneliness due to introversion and due to their parents; lack of desire to be involved.

These responses are often transmitted by the parents, and are exacerbated by exposure to sights and images that are hard to absorb and, as well as by the parents' preoccupation. They also reflect the implications and meaning of forced relocation for the family. 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 (Adjukovic and Adjukovic 1998; Laor et al. 2006). Moreover, studies have revealed that 1 year after evacuation in the wake of war, adolescents experienced adjustment problems and their scholastic achievements declined (Maksimovic et al. 2005). These problems were found especially among children who had been evacuated without family members

(Shacham and Lahad 2004). One of the explanations for this finding is based on the assumption that a person's home is a safe place, which symbolizes belonging, intimacy, and warmth (Silver 2005). Moreover, when experiences of separation from home are combined with other separations commonly experienced in latency age, stress and anxiety reactions increase (Weems and Costa 2005). However, it has also been argued that some children who are exposed to severe levels of stress and threat show especially high levels of resilience (Masten 2001). Shacham and Lahad (2004) found that when the northern region of Israel was under attack, children aged 9 through 12 exhibited higher levels of psychological stress responses than did 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.

In light of the dearth of research on this age group and on its unique characteristics, and in light of the specific context of political forced relocation from the Gush Katif area, the question arises: How did young children experience the forced relocation, and what was the long-term impact of the experience? To shed light on that question, the present article will describe a study that focused on describing perceptions of the forced relocation among latency-age children.

Research Questions

Forced relocation, as mentioned, combines the physical loss of one's home with psychological responses to loss and a transition period in temporary accommodations. It was assumed that these responses can affect the way a child copes with the experience of leaving home and the transition to new accommodations. Accordingly, the study aimed to examine the significance of political forced relocation, and how latency-age children cope with that experience over an extended period.

Method

Participants

The participants were 12 children (nine girls and three boys) aged 7–9, who had been evacuated from their homes in the Gaza area, and moved to permanent housing with all of the members of their community. The children belonged to the national religious movement, and were enrolled in elementary schools in their locality of residence. The group did not include children who had been injured in acts of terror while they were living in the Gaza area. In addition, the parents did not report that the children had any problems functioning before or after the evacuation.

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.

Instrument

The instrument used in the present study was a home drawing. Home drawings are among the most prevalent types of drawings in children's art. For individuals, the home symbolizes more than just a residential building or family accommodation. It is a safe haven—an intimate, protected space where people experience acceptance, love, and human warmth. In addition, it represents an image of the self that is presented to the world. The representation of the self within this structure is one way in which the archetype of the self is revealed (Dovey 1985). Art is a medium that enables children to express situations of stress and trauma through visual images, especially when they have difficulty verbalizing those situations (Stronach-Bushel 1990). The drawings reflect the children's traumatic internal experiences and the dramatic changes that occurred during the stressful period. However, they often also include figures that reflect coping and renewal (Betensky 1995; Malchiodi 1998). Hence, these drawings can be used in therapy and in interventions with children (Weimar 2005).

Data Collection

Three meetings were held with the participants. Separate meetings were held for boys and girls in a small group framework, which is appropriate for latency age children. At the beginning of each meeting, the mother of one child was present in order to ensure that the participants felt safe and confident. The small group context and the participation of a parent were designed to enable the children to feel

safe to make the drawings and to discuss the emotionally complex issue of forced relocation with the unfamiliar researcher. In addition, peer group interaction is most suitable for latency age (Malchiodi 1998). The amount of groups chosen was based on the depth dimension of qualitative research rather than on the width dimension, and was determined according to a model of nine individual interviews as the sample for phenomenological frames. The frame was chosen according to the researchers' saturation point. In other words, when the groups started repeating themes and information, they were stopped (Hubberman and Miles 2002; Patton 2002).
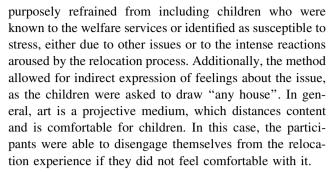
The children were asked to draw a picture of their home. It was clarified to them that they could draw any home they wished: their home in Gush Katif, or their present home. The children were also asked to choose the type of paper and implement they wished to use for their drawings. They worked on the drawings for 30–40 min. When they finished, the children gave a title to their drawings and some of them even added a few words of explanation.

Analysis of the Drawings

In the first stage, phenomenological analysis was conducted. In that analysis, the process of creating the drawing was linked with the outcome of the process for each drawing separately. In the second stage, the drawings were aggregated into main themes, according to the "place of the home" in each drawing. At this stage, two main groups of drawings were identified: one group emphasized the children's personal home, and the other emphasized their collective home. Afterwards, interpretive analysis was conducted (Furth 2002), and three categories of drawings were identified. One category was characterized on the basis of the children's coping patterns. That category focused mainly on the collective theme, and emphasized the motif of faith and ideology. In contrast, the second category of drawings reflected the children's feelings of fear and anxiety about what happened and what was going to be; and the third category included drawings that integrated the personal and community perspectives. 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.

Ethical Issues

In light of the participants' age, the parents agreed to let their children to participate in the study, and signed an informed consent form after the goals and procedures of the study were explained to them. The researchers purposely refrained from including children who were known to the welfare services or identified as susceptible to stress, either due to other issues or to the intense reactions aroused by the relocation process. Additionally, the method allowed for indirect expression of feelings about the issue, as the children were asked to draw "any house". In general, art is a projective medium, which distances content and is comfortable for children. In this case, the participants were able to disengage themselves from the relocation experience if they did not feel comfortable with it.

Moreover, in accordance with university procedures, the research project was approved by the faculty research committee. In addition, to facilitate matters for the children and to ensure that the interviews would be normative, the meetings were held in small groups. 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 pseudonyms were used in order to prevent them from being identified.

Results

Three themes were identified, which symbolize the children's perceptions of the evacuation over time, and reflect the three categories of drawings identified by the researchers. The first theme reflects the category of ideology and faith (e.g., "[Name of the settlement] Forever", and symbolizes the children's sense of belonging to the community and their strong ideological and collective experience. The second theme focuses on trauma, as expressed in the children's sense of fear, depression, and distance; the third theme reflects the synthesis between the individual and collective perspectives. Three drawings will be presented below, as examples of each of the three themes described above.

Ideology and Faith-"Gush Katif Forever-Whatever Happens, We Are Here to Stay"

Four drawings were placed in this category. The drawings reflect the theme of ideology and faith that emerged in the children's portrayal of their experience of relocation from Gush Katif. In these drawings, the children used the color orange, which was one of the symbols of the community; and "Gush Katif Forever" appeared as one of the most prevalent expressions, which symbolized the permanence and continuity of the community (Fig. 1).

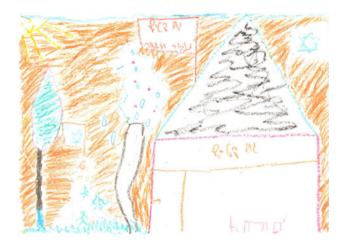Eight-year-old Uri drew a home in Gush Katif. The home is described schematically, and placed on the bottom

Fig. 1 The ideology picture

right-hand side of the page. The walls of the home are colored red, the roof is colored blue, and part of it is colored black. The home has an orange door with a handle. In the drawing, Uri attempts to show the interior and exterior of the home. A table and two chairs are shown inside of the home, and "Gush Katif" is written above the entrance. There are two flags on the roof: on the right side is the Israeli flag, with a Star of David but without the two blue stripes; on the left side, there is an orange flag with the slogan: "Gush Katif: We remember and will return". For the most part, the home itself is not colored in. This highlights the background of the drawing, which is fully colored in orange—the color of the evacuees' struggle against the disengagement plan. To the left of the home there are two trees: one tree has a thick trunk, which is hollow and crooked; the other tree is all colored green. The trees are very different from each other in their schemes and shapes, as well as in their functions: one is a decorative tree, and the other is a fruit tree. In addition, they are filled in differently: one of the trunks is all colored in, and the other is totally hollow. What the two trees share in common is the bottom part of the trunk: in the right tree, the bottom part is bent, and in the left tree, the color of the bottom part changes from blue to black.

In analyses of tree drawings, it is accepted to relate to the trunk as a symbol of the life course. Any flaw or change in the trunk can indicate a significant or traumatic event in the life of the person who created the drawing (Burns 1987). At the top of the tree on the right-hand side, there are red fruits and green leaves. Two of the leaves are falling from the tree. It is accepted to relate to fallen fruit or leaves as symbols of loss or significant pain in a person's life (Silver 2005). It is possible that Uri's experience of extreme change during the evacuation—the experience of being uprooted from his home and moving to a new locality—is expressed in the trees. However, between the

two trees there is a playground, a slide, a playhouse, and children playing on the playground equipment. The playhouse also has a flag, which combines the two flags on the large home—it is an orange flag with a blue Star of David. The playhouse is a smaller scale image of the family's home: it has a roof, windows, and even a flag that combines the two flags hanging from the roof of the family's home. There are no human figures in the family's home, but three active figures are in the playhouse. According to Uri's description, the children are playing in the house and sliding on the slide. The active figures in the drawing symbolize readiness to take action (Burns 1987).

The decision to place the above drawing in the category "ideology and faith" was based on the dominance of ideological symbols. The color orange stood out in all parts of the drawing, as did symbols of the struggle for Gush Katif. In addition, the words "Gush Katif" are written in orange on the outer wall of the home, as a kind of caption that Uri has given to the entire drawing. The drawing is designed in such a way that the strong message it conveys cannot be ignored. The message is conveyed in the slogan "Gush Katif: We remember and will return", which appears in the slogan at the top of the page, as well as on the orange flag opposite the Israeli national flag. It is also conveyed through the use of the orange as the dominant color. The slogan and the flags leave no room for doubt about the dominant role of ideology in Uri's inner experience. Another dimension that emerges from the drawing is Uri's optimistic perspective. This perspective is expressed in the portrayal of a playground, which is full of children, as well as in Uri's ability to express happiness despite—and perhaps because of—the orange theme which frames and even preserves his experience of the relocation. In the context of latency age, the theme of ideology and faith also reflects the parents' response to the experience of evacuation and relocation.

"Traumatic" Drawings that Express Fear, Depression and Distancing

Three of the drawings expressed anxiety, depression, and fear. In their explanations, some of the children attributed this to the relocation process, and to the arrival of soldiers in their homes. Others attributed this to the sense of mourning and anger over the relocation: the need to leave the surroundings of their childhood that they loved so much—the dunes, the space, and especially their homes, as well as the need to cope with the experience of being evacuated. Some of the children even mentioned the experience of coping with acts of terror before the relocation (Fig. 2).

Eight-year-old Tal used colored pencils in her drawing of Gush Katif (in contrast to the others, who used panda

Fig. 2 The traumatic picture

colors). Her drawing is symmetrical, with three hills colored in brown, and three houses, which are a recurring scheme. The houses have brown walls and a brown door, and the windows and roof are red. The houses seem a bit crooked and shaky. There are three palm trees between each house—also a recurring scheme. Each of the trees has a brown trunk, with three levels and four branches. In addition, there are three identical flowers, each with a stem, two green leaves, and a red flower head. The flowers are surrounded by a big lawn. At the top of her drawing, Tal wrote "Gush Katif Forever". Each of the three words is enclosed in a brown cloud, and the background is decorated schematically with 11 black birds. The whole picture is drawn in pencil, and in light colors—except for the birds and the words "Gush Katif Forever", which are drawn in black panda colors. In addition, the birds and the slogan are placed in the center of the page, and they are more prominent than the houses.

The picture expresses a sense of threat—like an unpleasant prophecy. The birds, which usually create a pleasant and peaceful atmosphere, appear out of place in the colorful picture. They descend on the houses, as if they are threatening to destroy them. The houses themselves look unstable and fragile. Two of them are drawn at an angle (at the side of the dune). The dune, which begins in a straight position, becomes crooked.

In general, the drawing generates a feeling of insecurity and threat. The figures are filled in superficially, without any investment of energy, and without any effort to be precise. There is a thick horizon line, and a yellow sun in the upper right hand side of the picture. The rays of the sun are asymmetrical; three of them are long, three are short, and they are not spread at equal distances. The sun symbolizes warmth and security (Burns 1987), but the way it is portrayed in this drawing makes it difficult to determine the extent to which it reflects Tal's sense of security. The sun is

there, and it is bright and shining—but its rays do not reach the houses and do not protect them. The association is one of abandonment—as if there is an entity that could have protected Gush Katif, but didn't do enough. It is also common to identify black birds with fear. As mentioned, fear is a typical emotion in latency-age children. By nature, their fear is supposed to be contained and organized. But in the present situation, it seems that there is no "responsible adult" or framework to absorb the danger. Tal succeeded in enclosing the clouds—which are often an expression of danger. In her picture, the clouds are placed in a frame in order to offset the threat. However, the presence of a lot of black birds, which take up a lot of space in the drawing, indicates that the threat exists.

The Integrative Drawing: A Synthesis Between Individual and Collective Perspectives

Five of the children succeeded in integrating the individual and collective perspectives, and expressed a sense of family as well as sense of collective togetherness (Fig. 3).

Eight-and-a-half year old Herut drew her house in Gush Katif as she remembered it. The house spans the entire width of the page, and looks as if it extends beyond the margins of the page. The home is colored light brown, and the roof is colored orange. The house is positioned in the lower third of the page, with a gray path leading to it. It has a brown door with a handle, and two windows: one window is drawn at the front of the house, and a person is looking out of it. The other window is on the roof. Both windows have black shutters. In the window on the roof, the shutters are closed; in the window at the front of the house the shutters are open, and a figure with an orange head covering is looking out. To the right of the door at the entrance to the house, Herut drew a cage with parakeets. On the bars of the cage there are orange ribbons. On the left side of the

Fig. 3 The integrative picture

picture, there are two decorative bushes on the ground—one has orange flowers, and one doesn't have flowers. The drawing has a clear horizon line, and the sun is shining on the left-hand side of the page.

The perspective of the drawing is organized and clear. The house takes up most of the room. The caption "[*name of the settlement*] Forever" is above the house, on the horizon line. Other objects are at the bottom of the house, in a straight line. It appears that for Herut, the house represents family; the mother is in the house, peering outside of the window. Herut also added a few words to the picture, in which she indicated where each person is sleeping. In that way, she essentially filled the house with the members of her own family. In contrast to most of the children's drawings, where the homes were empty and hollow, Herut's home is colorful, and reflects a happy, positive atmosphere. The use of colors is controlled—not too strong and not too weak; the figure in the house is smiling, and flowers are blooming outside.

However, because the house fills the entire page, it may create a feeling of inundation. Herut also mentioned that she was "full" of memories from home, which she felt she must preserve. Those memories included her identification with Gush Katif and the community. In her drawing, the ground is clearly delineated, with a path leading to the home; and the horizon line is thick and blue. On the whole, the drawing is organized and the inclusion of others in the picture (the mother and other family members) helps create the feeling of a home that stands on a strong foundation—There is a way to enter the home, and a way to get out. The drawing reflects a pattern of coping that involves other people, and that is open to receiving help in the effort to cope with the past trauma and future uncertainty.

Regarding the slogan that appears as a caption to the drawing "[*name of the settlement*] Forever", it should be noted that words are often added when there is a feeling that the message in the drawing has not been sufficiently conveyed (Furth 2002; Silver 2005; Wilson 2001). The message here is: "we will maintain our identity; we will not capitulate to the outcome of the evacuation"; "the former community has remained, in every sense". This message is also expressed in the color orange, which appears in five elements of the drawing: the roof, orange ribbons, orange flowers, the mother's orange head covering, and in the slogan. The drawing also provided an incentive for Herut to talk about life in Gush Katif. When she talked about the drawing, she described the surroundings of her home, the building, and where each of the family members slept. It appears that she remembered a lot about the locality, just as she remembers herself walking on the paths between the houses and mentioned that she cried during the evacuation. In addition, the drawing reflects an ability to accept assistance and rather than cope

alone, as mentioned, which is not typical of children her age. Evidently, this enabled her to maintain the sense of optimism about the future which comes through so clearly in the drawing.

Analysis of the Findings

In most of the home drawings, the children chose to focus on their home in Gush Katif rather than on their new home in the permanent locality. They did so, even though the study was conducted about 2 years after the disengagement from the settlements in the Gaza area and northern Samaria. In Hebrew, the term *bayit* can be translated as "home" or "house". The term "home" encompasses personal relationships, whereas a "house" is an object in one's environment. It is possible that some of the children viewed the "home" as a concrete object, and therefore drew their private houses, whereas others related to the concept in its broader sense, as part of the environment. In all of the drawings presented here, the children's choice to draw one house rather than the entire community shows that they focused on their perceptions of the place as a home, and not just on their perceptions of the transition. Quite a few of the drawings suggest that the collective nature of the society in which the children grew up could have expanded the private domain of the family home to the public domain of the community. Gush Katif was actually a place in which children felt "at home", and for that reason they chose to draw their homes in that environment. Another explanation relates to the ideological orientation that was observed in some of the drawings. It is possible that the portrayal of their homes at Gush Katif was influenced by the slogan of the struggle against the evacuation: "Gush Katif—It's My Home". The impact of that statement on the children who participated in the study might derive from their developmental stage. At their age, children would interpret the statement in its literal sense, and draw their "homes" at Gush Katif. In addition, it is possible that they were thinking in ideological terms. Thus, when they drew a home, they were guided by their ideology and drew Gush Katif rather than their current home. Moreover, because the children were sitting together and could see what the others were drawing, they might have tried to make similar pictures (Solberg 1994; Weimar 2005). It is also noteworthy that latency-age children emphasize being part of a group, and that the children participating in this study were raised in a closed, collective environment with an ideological orientation, where the members of the community support one another. It is possible that both of these factors contributed to the emphasis on their home in Gush Katif.

The ideological explanation is also supported by the symbols and figures that recurred in many of the children's

drawings, such as trees (mainly a palm tree), the Israeli flag, an orange flag, and black birds. It can be assumed that each of these symbols had collective significance in addition to personal significance for the children. Interestingly, the literal Hebrew translation of "forced relocation" is "forced uprooting"—a term that projects from the world of plants to the world of human beings. In the struggle against the relocation from the Gaza area, this comparison was evident in the use of the term "uprooting of settlements". In the case of the children in the present study, the entire community viewed themselves as a tree that was uprooted. In some of the drawings, the tree was given "personal" characteristics that are not typical of palm trees, such as fruit and damage to the trunk. This finding supports the interpretation that the palm tree—a symbol of Gush Katif—as a symbol wholeness and community, whereas the other trees can be viewed as symbols of personal motifs in the drawing.

The drawing of the flag also relates to the community. The flag is a symbol of the struggle against the relocation from the Gaza area, and it was colored orange or appeared next to an orange flag. The flag represents the strong presence of ideology in the children's lives, and also symbolizes belonging to a group. According to Jung (1974), the collective symbol contains projections of the collective unconscious, and is a space for processing conflicts and gathering strength. In the drawings, the children express their sense of belonging to the community, their faith, and their belief that a supreme power will continue protecting them after the relocation.

In contrast to the symbols that are a source of strength and facilitate coping, the children used two more symbols that reflect homesickness as well as fear and anxiety. The images of mountains and the sea are symbols of longing, and express the children's concrete memory of the geographic features of Gush Katif. The children mentioned that when other youth draw that area, they depict it with houses on dunes or mountains and the sea. Thus, it is possible that the pictures drawn by the other youth enabled these children to identify with a broader group of "Youth from Gush Katif". At their age, the children's memory might also have been influenced by the parents' perspectives (Weems and Costa 2005).

The black birds can also depict a sense of threat looming over the home or over the individual (Furth 2002). In most of the drawings, the birds are colored black; some of them virtually surround the house, and are not just hovering over it. Thus, it is possible to understand the birds as a symbol of the continuous threat of rocket attacks that the children had been exposed to throughout their lives in Gush Katif. However, it is also possible that the birds reflect the children's experience and their perception of the evacuation. Something threatening took place following the disengagement, and the prominent presence of black birds in the drawings reflects the threat that persists to this very day (Masten 2001).

Regarding the use of words, almost all of the drawings include slogans that express the children's political ideology and their opposition to the forced relocation from Gush Katif. In some of the drawings, the slogan "[*name of the settlement*] Forever" is written above the picture. When the children were asked about the meaning of the slogan, they answered that they needed to continue being "[*the settlement they were evacuated from*]". The slogan highlights their sense of belonging and identification with that specific group. As mentioned, latency-age children tend to feel secure when they are with their peers (Sroufe et al. 1998). This might show that the children used universal mechanisms in order to feel that they were thinking about the homes they were evacuated from—whether they did so out of feelings such as a sense of loss, homesickness, or insecurity. It is possible that the picture in itself was not sufficient, and they felt a need to emphasize their ideological position. It is also possible that the children sought to convey their feeling that the struggle for Gush Katif is not over—whether this was an opinion they felt personally or an opinion they heard at home. Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that in the context of the relocation, latency-age children—and especially their older siblings—were involved in the protest against the plan and accompanied their parents in those activities.

Discussion

The findings indicate that 2 years after the relocation, the children still considered the home they had been evacuated from as their natural home, and as a place that gives them a sense of security and belonging. The finding that many of the drawings reflected a collectivist orientation is also noteworthy. This orientation typifies children at that developmental stage, and characterizes the uniqueness of the community they belonged to. In addition, many of the drawings expressed an ideological message. Only a few of them associated the evacuation with feelings of distress, which typify other situations of this nature (Masten 2001). Moreover, drawings were colorful and full of objects. This might reflect the children's need to describe as many details as possible from their home in Gush Katif, as well as their need to prove that they remember both the "public" home in the community and their "private" home. Hence, it appears that their memories and experiences from Gush Katif are very much present in their world, and that the period they spent in the settlement remained a meaningful part of their values, ideology, and self-identity.

The large space that the past occupies in the children's drawings can also be analyzed in light of trauma and stress theories. From those perspectives, it can be argued that the forced relocation was so traumatic that it caused the children to cling to memories of the past rather than think about the present. However, in contrast to cases of post-traumatic stress, where memories of trauma are intrusive, unregulated, and maladaptive (Peri 2002), most of the children's drawings here did not reveal those symptoms. Therefore, even the drawings that were defined as "traumatic" essentially revealed no indications of distress or severe problems. The drawings reflect the children's patterns of coping with the relocation, which focused on the support and containment they received from their families, and especially from their community. Some of the children drew a figure of a woman, who was designated as the mother, other children drew additional family members. Nor was the role of the community neglected, as evidenced in the depictions of the children's former settlement and its symbols, as well as in the slogan "[name of the settlement] Forever" and similar expressions.

Although these findings pertain to a specific situation of forced relocation, the coping patterns are consistent with Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll 1989, 2001), as well as with the results of studies that have examined coping patterns among adult populations following the disengagement from the Gaza area and other traumatic events. For example, the sense of belonging to the community plays an important role in moderating pathological symptoms following prolonged exposure to terror (Dekel and Nuttman-Shwartz 2009). Similar findings have also been revealed with regard to forced relocation. For example, Kliot (1987) highlighted the importance of moving to a settlement with people who are "in the same boat"; and Galili and Lev-Wiesel (2007), found that family is the main factor that contributes to adjusting to new surroundings among evacuees in a situation of forced relocation. The evacuees from the settlement in which the present study was conducted chose to move together to a new, permanent locality. At that locality, they preserved the institutions that existed in Gush Katif (e.g., the education system, community institutions, and religious institutions), and they developed a supportive social network that helped the community members cope. The analysis of the drawings revealed several coping patterns, which helped the children deal with the relocation. Those patterns included: *Distancing*—There were drawings which portrayed a home that is not actually "my house", and a child who is "not me". *Clinging to the past and idealization*—Most of the drawings portrayed Gush Katif in a pastoral, calm light. Even the drawings that included descriptions of traumatic events such as mortar attacks or soldiers coming to evacuate residents did not generate negative feelings. In the

children's drawings, it was possible to identify an attempt to recall as many details as possible about the homes they left. *Protection*—In some of the drawings, the children chose to use symbols that signified protection, such as a Star of David or the sun. The use of symbols helped the children relate to issues and feelings that reflected their perceptions of the concept of home. Another source of support was found in the choice of a symbol relating to the community rather than to a specific person. The extensive reference to ideological aspects in the children's drawings cannot be ignored. Their connection with ideology was a symbolic way for them to gather strength, and helped them cope with the stress caused by the relocation.

If drawings are viewed as a space that enables children to process and cope with significant life events, the ideological aspect might also reflect the parents' negative perceptions of the relocation (Nuttman-Shwartz 2008). At the same time, however, the emphasis on ideology may have protected the children against the pain involved in losing their home, and against the consequences of the relocation as a traumatic event. The drawings contained motifs that express the children's ideology and their sense of belonging to a community—factors that protected the entire population of evacuees, including the children. Another protective factor is the children's expression of fear and anxiety about the future, as reflected in the emphasis on black birds in one of the drawings. Above all, ideology provided the children with a sense of security, so that they could express their homesickness and use it as a basis for constructing the story of relocation in a way that emphasizes the struggle rather than a sense of helplessness. Ideology enabled the children to be proactive and positive, and gave them hope that they would be able to restore what they had lost. In that connection, studies have shown that faith in general and religious faith in particular facilitate effective coping with situations of stress, crisis, and trauma (Kaplan et al. 2005; Laor et al. 2006). Nonetheless, it is possible that the children's use of ideology in their drawings and their preoccupation with the memory of Gush Katif also reflects intergenerational transmission of the parents' attempt to perpetuate that community and the children's internalization of the parental ideology (Volkan 1997). The children's emphasis on faith and ideology is also characteristic of the cognitive-developmental stage of latency.

In sum, the findings of the study indicate that the experience of relocation was significant for the children, and that even 2 years afterwards the event continued to accompany them. The qualitative design chosen for this study and analysis of the drawings helped expose the ways that children in a collective society express themselves, and showed that they rely on shared meanings and group affiliation in order to enhance their sense of security and

ability to cope. Accordingly, the contribution of this study to intervention in the field is its integration of the collective-ideological dimension as a factor that enhances resiliency and facilitates coping with situations of stress and trauma.

The study demonstrates how to use creative tools that enable children to articulate the feelings aroused by past experiences as clearly as possible in a relatively short time. The ability to identify patterns of coping based on a methodology that is appropriate for latency-age children can serve as a basis for interventions at that stage of development. This kind of work allows for deep expression, and enables the children to express how they coped with the relocation and its implications. No less importantly, it highlights the significance of community affiliation in enhancing children's sense of security, as well as the therapeutic, salutogenic dimension of community affiliation.

Before concluding, a limitation of the study should be noted. Because the study focused on a community that moved together to a permanent locality, it is difficult to generalize the findings to other populations that were relocated but did not find permanent housing. Hence, because forced relocation is becoming an increasingly prevalent social phenomenon, and our research examined an uprooting process that was accompanied by intense public controversy. Hence, there is a need to conduct further studies on the implications of forced relocation as a stress-producing event and as a crisis. It is also recommended to compare the effect of different types of uprooting—i.e., relocation that aims to save lives versus relocation that results from political conflict and is accompanied by public controversy. In addition, further studies should deal with the facilitating factors that might contribute to policy-making and interventions among people of various ages who have had a similar experience in the past or are likely to have such an experience in the future.

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