

Multiple Losses of Social Resources Following Collective Trauma: The Case of the Forced Relocation From Gush Katif

Rachel Dekel and Rivka Tuval-Mashiach
Bar Ilan University

Collective trauma may lead to a pervasive loss of personal and social resources. The current study used a mixed method design to explore losses of social connections and affiliations following the collective trauma of forced relocation. A sample of 269 relocated residents from Gush Katif completed open-ended questionnaires regarding their ability to cope following the relocation, as well as questionnaires regarding their sense of belonging to the country, their sense of alienation from government institutions, post traumatic symptoms, and well-being. Three themes emerged in the qualitative stage of the study as the primary losses experienced by participants: loss of physical place and landscape, loss of a sense of belonging to Israeli society, and loss of trust and alienation from the country's institutions. The quantitative stage revealed a complementary picture, with lower place commitment and higher alienation contributing directly both to post traumatic symptoms and to a reduced sense of well-being. In addition, a sense of alienation from the institutions of the country mediated the associations between the sense of belonging to the country and post traumatic symptoms and well-being. These findings are discussed in relation to the concept of social capital as a key factor in explaining one's ability to cope with collective trauma.

Keywords: collective trauma, sense of belonging, alienation, place attachment, forced relocation

Traumatic events can shatter lives and result in a major loss of resources for the individuals affected by them (e.g., Hobfoll, 2001; Mayer & Conte, 2006). These losses can include the physical (health, shelter, and safety), the personal/ psychological (self-esteem and emotional well-being) the moral/spiritual (values and belief system) and the social (family, friends, and community). Previous research done in the field of trauma has focused primarily on the loss of personal resources following a trauma. Only lately has the perspective broadened to include the loss of social and community resources. The need to examine the loss of social resources is particularly crucial in cases of collective trauma.

Collective trauma is a trauma that is experienced by numerous individuals simultaneously. A collective traumatic event can be a single event that occurred in the past (e.g., the Holocaust or the Armenian genocide) or current ongoing events (e.g., racism or severe poverty). Collective trauma can also be the result of human misconduct (e.g., wars and forced relocations) or natural circumstances (e.g., earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes). Erikson (1994) defined collective trauma as a "blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of community" (p. 233).

In many collective traumas, distress may stem not only from the event itself but also from the treatment and services provided by

responsible authorities in the aftermath of the event (Fullerton, Ursano, Norwood, & Holloway, 2003). Therefore, the result of a loss of confidence and trust in these authorities should also be taken into account. Research regarding these aspects is still scarce, however, and most studies of collective trauma have focused on the loss of personal resources only (see, e.g., Conejero & Etxebarria, 2007; Gortner & Pennebaker, 2003; Pennebaker & Banasik, 1997; Updegraff, Cohen-Silver, & Holman, 2008; Wayment, 2004).

Social capital is a global concept that refers to the tendency of individuals to invest, access, and utilize resources embedded in social networks (such as their community or country) to gain returns (Lin, 2001). Social capital includes the support one receives from friends and family and from one's larger neighborhood and community (Perkins, Hughey, & Speer, 2002; Perkins & Long, 2002; Saegert & Winkel, 2004). As such, the current study examined both the contribution of a sense of belonging to the country, and alienation from its institutions, following the forced relocation of Jewish communities from the Gaza Strip.

Sense of Belonging to the Country

A sense of belonging refers to a person's feeling of being part of a collective group (Newbrough & Chavis, 1986), whether it is a neighborhood, community, nation, or any other group or place. It is characterized by mutual concern, connection, community loyalty, and trust that one's personal needs will be fulfilled by means of a commitment to the group as a whole (Chavis, Hogge, McMillan, & Wandersman, 1986). Other manifestations include the wish to remain in the community and to encourage others to join it (Itzhaky, 1995). These manifestations, specifically in regard to the feeling of "belonging to the country," may represent the emotional attach-

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Rachel Dekel, The Louis and Gabi Weisfeld School of Social Work, Bar Ilan University; Rivka Tuval-Mashiach, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Psychology, Bar Ilan University.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr. Rachel Dekel, The Louis and Gabi Weisfeld School of Social Work, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel. E-mail: dekell@mail.biu.ac.il

ment to the land itself and the commitment to the place as evidenced by the wish to continue to live there.

According to Fisher, Sonn, and Bishop (2002), people who experience a strong sense of community gain multiple benefits. They are better adjusted, they have goals that reach beyond their own limited aspirations, and they enjoy greater levels of social support and social connectedness. A strong sense of community acts as a buffer against outside threats, provides a place in which individuals are free to express their identities, and helps individuals deal with changes and difficulties in society at large. Recent findings in Israel show that a sense of belonging to a country is associated with lower levels of distress in the wake of ongoing terror in that country (Dekel & Nuttman-Shwartz, 2009; Kovatz, Kutz, Rubin, Dekel, & Shenkman, 2006).

Alienation

Whereas a sense of belonging is related to an emotional connectedness to one's community and its people, alienation refers to a sense of social estrangement and an absence of social support and meaningful social connections (Mau, 1992) from family, friends, or formal institutions (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Within the national context, alienation is often related to powerlessness and estrangement from the political and social systems.

Dean (1961) defined alienation as consisting of three dimensions: social isolation, powerlessness, and normlessness. Social isolation is the feeling of loneliness, even when in the company of others, and develops due to a perceived lack of meaningful and intimate relationships with peers, family, and the wider community. Powerlessness is a belief that one has little control over what happens to him/her and is not confident that his or her choices will exert any influence over his or her situation. People who feel powerless often feel that their needs and voices are not heard and that they are merely being used as pawns in political decisions. Finally, normlessness involves a rejection of the dominant rules and values of society and those of the majority cultural group. In relation to the country, normless citizens tend to feel that they do not relate to the country's prevailing norms, they have difficulty conforming to rules and codes, and their values and goals conflict with the country's. Dean (1961) published empirical evidence to support the existence of these three dimensions and suggested that an individual's experience of any one of them is sufficient to result in his or her feeling alienated.

A qualitative study following Hurricane Katrina analyzed the feelings of trust that the people affected by it held toward social and political systems (Cordasco, Eisenman, Glik, Golden, & Asch, 2007). The most frequently mentioned category of trust was "lack of competency" among all levels of authority ranging from federal and local government officials to emergency workers. The second most frequently mentioned category was "lack of equity." People believed that the preparations and responses were performed slowly and ineffectively precisely because of their race and the socioeconomic composition of their neighborhoods. Whereas these concepts differ from the concept of alienation, they demonstrate the need to study the relations among people and their social and political institutions.

The Relocation From Gush Katif

Jewish settlement in Gush Katif began in 1967 after Israel conquered the Gaza Strip. Eight thousand people, most of them Orthodox Jews who moved there for ideological reasons, took up residence in 17 settlements. The majority of these residents saw themselves as pioneers, as the people who would dedicate their lives and endanger their safety for what they believed to be the Zionist ideology: to live in all parts of the land of Israel. These residents experienced intensive ongoing terrorism over the five years prior to their relocation. More than 6,000 Kassam rockets, mortar shells, shootings, and suicide bombers threatened their lives. Despite this wave of terrorism, due to the cohesiveness and support of the Gush Katif communities, very few residents left the area before the governmental relocation (Billig, 2005).

In August 2005, as part of Israel's unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip, the residents of Gush Katif were forced to leave, and their homes were demolished. Even though the government's decision to disengage from Gush Katif was made more than a year prior to the implementation of this decision, the actual amount of time the government spent on preparing for relocation, compensation, and absorption of the evacuees was much shorter; in reality, this preparation lasted only a few months. The evacuees were individually placed in temporary homes and hotels, and many of them lost their original community affiliations during this period.

The forced relocation from Gush Katif in Israel in the summer of 2005 can be viewed as a collective trauma for the relocated residents. Forced relocation involves a significant disruption of daily life, the collapse of familiar networks, threats to beliefs and values, the loss of a home and familiar environment, disconnection from the community, and the loss of physical resources. A concentrated loss of resources can be particularly traumatic when it is neither chosen nor under the control of the evacuee (Hobfoll, 1989). Studies regarding the impact of forced relocation on personal well-being have for the most part been conducted in the wake of natural disasters, and it has been found that evacuees exhibit a wide range of emotional and psychological responses: among them pain, grief, anger, anxiety, maladjustment, depression, and difficulty in the domains of couple or family relations. Such responses were witnessed both in the short term and the long term (e.g., Aroain, 1990; Goenjian et al., 2001; Gerrity & Steinglass, 2003). Studies of refugees who have lost their homes due to war or political upheaval demonstrated that this population experienced an increased vulnerability to physical and emotional complaints (Jaranson & Popkin, 1998; Silove, 2000). As typifies all forced relocations, the people who were evacuated from Gush Katif lost their known physical environments, their homes, jobs, income, and social networks. Anger was expressed at the authorities regarding the implementation of the relocation, the inadequate arrangements that had been set up for the absorption, and the placement of residents following the relocation.

The Current Study

The concepts of sense of belonging and alienation are two distinct resources representing the social capital of the people, on the community level, which in the current study is the country of Israel. The first resource is a sense of belonging, namely, feeling

attached to the country and its people and relating to the collective. The second resource is alienation, which relates to a person's feeling apart and estranged from the formal institutions and organizations of the country that implement the culture's values. This study examined the contribution of these resources to post traumatic symptoms and the well-being of the settlers following their relocation from Gush Katif. These resources were chosen because they represent the core elements of the trust that was breached by the enactment of this relocation: a relocation of cohesive communities that had settled in these areas out of an ideological commitment to the country of Israel, a country that originally encouraged them to settle in these areas but that was later the very entity that initiated and carried out this evacuation. The dependent variables were chosen to pertain both to the traumatic nature of the event and to the broader well-being of the settlers following this event.

Due to the limited knowledge of the role played by these resources in response to collective trauma, the current study used a mixed method design. The first part of the study was qualitative and explored how these concepts were presented and described in an open ended-questionnaire. The second part of the study was quantitative. Based on the literature review that found that people with a greater sense of belonging were more well-adjusted (Fisher et al., 2002) and reported lower levels of distress in the wake of ongoing terror (Dekel & Nuttman-Shwartz, 2009; Kovatz et al., 2006), we hypothesized that a higher level of sense of belonging would be associated with lower post traumatic symptoms and a higher level of well-being. In addition, we hypothesized that a higher level of alienation would be associated with a higher level of post traumatic symptoms and a lower level of well-being. Furthermore, we went on to look at a more complex model, one that is based on the idea that "an individual is nested in a family that is nested in a tribe" (Hobfoll, 2001, p. 338) and accordingly hypothesized that the greater an individual's level of commitment to place was the greater his sense of belonging to the people of that place would be and that these people would then help the individual feel that he or she was a part of the country and its institutions (See Figure 1). Thus, the associations between the variables spread outward from a narrow circle to a wider one: commitment to a physical place, followed by a sense of belonging to the people of

the country, followed by positive feelings toward the country's institutions.

Whereas the phenomenon of forced relocation is unique, we believe that the knowledge gained from this inquiry could be applicable to other situations in which federal authorities are perceived as being responsible for the traumatic event and/or play a role in caring for or treating residents following these events.

Method

Sample and Data Collection

The sample consisted of 269 residents who were evacuated from Gush Katif. Almost two thirds (63%) of the participants were women, a figure that can be attributed to the fact that they were the ones at home and therefore more available to be interviewed. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 71 ($M = 35.5$, $SD = 12.17$), and the average duration of time they lived in Gush Katif was 16.3 years ($SD = 7.7$). The majority (85.5%) were born in Israel; 73.6% were married; 76.6% were religious; 8.3% were Ultraorthodox; and 15.1% were nonreligious or traditional. Fifty-five percent of the participants reported a below average state income, 29.6% an above average state income, and 15.2% an approximately average state income.

Procedure

Data were collected by trained research assistants during the period of six to 15 months following the relocation. The sample was a targeted one: research assistants visited the four temporary housing sites to which the majority of evacuees had moved. More than half of the sample (57.1%) were living in the large temporary dwelling area; 29.4% were living in caravans in a smaller dwelling area; 8.9% were living in hotels; and 4.6% were living in apartments they had rented for themselves.

This geographical distribution of the study participants was similar in ratio to the geographical distribution of the entire relocated community (Yad Katif memorial website, 2006). At each site, research assistants approached evacuees' houses and ex-

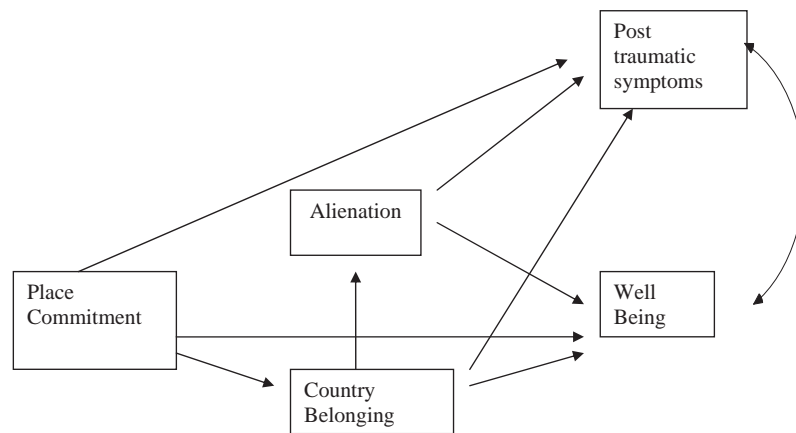


Figure 1. The theoretical model: Direct and indirect effects of belonging variables on post traumatic symptoms and well-being.

plained that the subject of the study was the adjustment of evacuees following the relocation. Contact was made with 360 relocated residents, of which 269 agreed to participate (74.7%). Only one person per household filled out the questionnaire. The most frequent reasons for refusal to participate were being too busy due to the search for new jobs or lack of interest in participating. Data collection ended eight months after the study began. Participants received research questionnaires to be completed at their convenience. All participants gave their informed consent upon distribution of the questionnaires, and questionnaires were collected a few days later. Participation was voluntary, and participants did not receive any incentives.

Measures

Qualitative Questionnaire

Participants answered an open-ended questionnaire in which they were asked three questions:

1. What are the main changes you have experienced as a result of the relocation?
2. In what ways do you think the relocation will affect your future life?
3. How do you understand the event and why it happened?

Each participant wrote his or her answers in the space provided.

Quantitative Measures

Sociodemographic characteristics. Questions were asked regarding gender, age, family status, religious beliefs, education, and length of time having lived in Gush Katif.

Exposure to traumatic life events. Participants were asked whether they had experienced terror attacks when they were living in Gush Katif and whether they had experienced additional traumatic life events. Exposure to terror during life in Gush Katif in this sample was very high with almost no variability. Therefore, the total score was calculated as the number of additional traumatic life events that the participant had experienced.

Post traumatic symptoms. The post traumatic symptom level was evaluated using the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Inventory (Solomon et al., 1993), a self-report scale that consists of 17 statements corresponding to the 17 core post traumatic symptoms listed in the *DSM-IV* (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Each symptom was phrased in relation to the relocation (e.g., “images and/or thoughts of the evacuation keep coming back to me”). Participants were asked to indicate for each statement whether, following the relocation, they experienced this symptom on a scale from *not at all* (1) to *very often* (4). The severity of the distress was calculated by the mean number of symptoms checked off. The questionnaire was found to have high convergent validity when compared with diagnoses based on structured clinical interviews (Solomon et al., 1993). The Cronbach Alpha in the current study was 0.90.

Well-being. Well-being was evaluated using the General Well-Being Schedule (GWB). The GWB (Dupuy, 1978) is a 33-item self-report instrument designed to assess selected aspects

of self-representations of subjective well-being and distress. It includes six subscales that measure health concerns, energy level, satisfaction with life, mood, emotional and behavioral control, and tension-anxiety versus calm. Ratings can be either of the individual scales or a comprehensive total. In the current study, a total score was calculated in which a high score reflected a greater sense of well-being. The scale has been widely used as an index of general subjective psychological well-being (Goodwin, Chuang, Simuro, Davies, & Pine, 2006). The internal reliability of the total scale was .93.

Sense of belonging to the country. The sense of belonging to one’s country was measured on a scale developed by Bavely (1995) and previously applied by Itzhaky (1995). The items tapped the respondents’ feelings around their sense of belonging to Israel (e.g., “I feel that I’m part of the country”) and their commitment to the country (e.g., “I won’t leave the country even if the security situation deteriorates”). Factor analysis conducted within the current sample revealed two factors that explained 56.63% of the variance. The first factor explained 39.2% of the variance and consisted of seven items tapping the respondents’ sense of belonging to the country and its people (e.g., “I feel that I’m part of the country; I am proud to tell people where I live”). The second factor consisted of six items examining commitment and attachment to the place and the wish to stay in Israel (e.g., “I won’t leave the country even for better conditions in another place”). For each item, respondents were asked to indicate their agreement on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*very much*). Cronbach’s Alpha for the first factor was 0.86 and 0.80 for the second.

Alienation Toward the Political and Social Systems of the Israeli Government

Feelings of powerlessness, alienation and strangeness toward the social and political systems were measured by the political alienation scale (Davis & Smith, 1996). This scale was chosen because it taps specifically into feelings of alienation toward the social and political systems (Hensley, Hensley, & Munro, 1975). The questionnaire included six items (e.g., “People who run the country don’t really care about you”). For each item, respondents were asked to indicate their agreement on a scale from 1 (*not agree at all*) to 6 (*totally agree*). The Cronbach’s Alpha in the current study was 0.82.

Data Analysis

The study used a concurrent nested strategy for mixed method designs (Creswell, 2003). In this strategy, there is one data collection phase during which both quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously and in which one method (in this study the qualitative) is secondary to the other (“nested” within it). Such a strategy enables one to ask two different questions, one in each methodology. It is a useful strategy when the researcher is interested in gaining a broader perspective on the studied phenomena.

The qualitative questionnaire was filled out by 230 (90%) of the participants. For the purposes of the current study, each participant’s answers to the three open-ended questions were combined into one narrative. The analysis process involved two stages. In the first stage, each narrative was content-analyzed independently by the two authors for all categories of affiliations and relationships to

different social circles. In this strategy, the text was coded into closed categories that summarized and systemized the data. Three main categories of relationships emerged as representing the data: attitudes toward Israeli institutions, Israeli society, and the physical land of Israel. Interrater reliability was at the level of $\kappa = 1$, regarding the existence of these three categories. In the second stage, each narrative was coded for the existence of each of the three categories. At this stage, interrater reliability was $\kappa = 0.9$. As is common in qualitative research, we employed confirmatory and exploratory analyses. In confirmatory analysis, the researcher tries to confirm or validate prior theoretical notions, whereas exploratory analysis aims to open up new hypotheses and theoretical concepts (Patton, 2002). In the current work, existing literature on alienation and disruption in one's sense of belonging—in the context of forced relocation (as cited above)—guided our initial readings of the narratives. Subsequently, themes that emerged as a result of reading the narratives refined our further readings of the material and served as the basis for a more open, exploratory analysis of the different aspects of the relationships to which the participants referred. The categories can be predefined before analysis (top-down approach) or as in the case of the current study, be derived from the text itself (a bottom-up approach). The endpoint of content analysis may be to illustrate the contents or to provide estimates of the frequency with which each category emerges among participants (Lieblich, Tival-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Smith, 2008). The aim was to explore the changes people described in their involvement and relationships with different networks.

The quantitative part of the study examined the associations between a sense of belonging to a country and a sense of alienation from the country and the direct and indirect effects on post traumatic symptoms and well-being. To answer these questions, we used the Structural Equation Model (SEM), using AMOS-4 software. The use of SEM has several advantages. It enables simultaneous evaluation of several regression models, as well as the manipulation of constraints, to allow for the comparison of different models and ultimately revealing the best fitted and most parsimonious model.

Results

Qualitative Findings

Upon reading the combined narrative of responses, three main themes emerged, each one reflecting a certain change or loss in the participant's life: a change in the feeling of belonging to the institutions of the Israeli state (in 69% of the narratives); a change toward Israeli society and its people (in 40% of the narratives); and a change in the physical familiarity with the environment (home, landscapes, in 31% of the narratives).

Changes in the Feeling of Belonging to or Identification With the Institutions of Israeli Society

As described, an overwhelming majority of participants (69%) spontaneously referred to a negative change in their feeling or attitude toward the state's institutions. This spontaneous response was noteworthy, as the question that had been asked referred to the adjustment they had made in their own *personal* lives. But despite

our expectations, most participants did not refer to their private or personal adjustments at all. The main feelings expressed in the narratives were disappointment, rage and anger, and feelings of betrayal and shock toward those they held responsible for the relocation plan.

What hurt me the most was seeing the way the country and army that I love so much acted with such evilness and conspiracy. They destroyed my beautiful beloved piece of land . . . they led me to hate the army and my country. I hope I will come to love them again in the future. In my head I know I should, but in my heart I can't. (No. 228, male)

These emotions were aimed at Israeli institutions: the government, the police, and the army that implemented the relocation. But they were also directed at specific people, including the prime minister, the specific soldiers who physically came to evacuate the residents, and police officers. Many participants stated that they did not feel they were a part of the nation anymore, as the following example demonstrates:

There was a prevailing sense of betrayal. I had always had a strong sense of belonging to the country and to the army, but the relocation destroyed that. There was a fatal disruption in my basic belief in the benevolence of the world. I had not done anything bad and I didn't deserve to have something bad like this happen to me. And the hardest part was knowing that it was my very family (namely, people from my own nation) who did this to me! (No. 155, female)

Feelings of estrangement and alienation toward state institutions are to be expected as a result of any forced relocation, but the situation in Gush Katif prior to the relocation only heightened these feelings. The residents in this sample considered themselves representatives of the will of the whole nation when they settled in this area. They were protected by massive army units and had to cope with intensive shooting and terror attacks for many years. They did so out of an ideology that espoused settling all parts of the land of Israel and could not have predicted or believed that the state that "had sent" them to Gush Katif would change its ideology and that relocation would eventually take place. When it did indeed happen, their entire ideology and set of values were seriously challenged.

For me the uprooting was a terrible blow. I felt the government used us for political reasons, and when they didn't need us to live there anymore, they exiled us. I am against the way decisions are made at the government level, and I felt sadder about the way this decision was made than I did about the decision itself. I felt that we were treated as second class citizens. I've undergone a total change of perception toward the country's institutions, and I feel distrust and disappointment. (No. 1, female)

Feelings of betrayal and anger pertained not only to the relocation itself, but extended also to the treatment of the residents following the relocation. The residents felt they were poorly treated in regard to placement, compensation, and absorption in their new homes.

Now, after uprooting us, I feel that the government has relocated us . . . in order to humiliate us, the residents of Gush Katif . . . we get the feeling that we are being continuously punished (No. 267, male).

Changes in Feelings of Belonging to Israeli Society

Another facet of belonging that was challenged by the relocation, centered on the Gush Katif residents' feelings toward the general public, or "the Nation," which emerged in 40% of the narratives. The primary emotions experienced by the residents were betrayal and pain due to the perceived indifference of the general Israeli public toward the relocation. The residents also described feeling anger and frustration regarding the fact that the protest against the relocation plan failed to engage Israeli society at large.

It is interesting to note that in many of the participants' narratives, the adjectives used were not in the singular form, but rather the plural, as if individuals were speaking on behalf of their communities. This finding emphasizes the collective nature of the trauma, and the feelings of "us against them."

One change for the worse is the lack of love (or a serious decrease in it) that we have for the state and the people of Israel. *We* once really trusted them, the people in the general population, and now I've lost this trust, which leads to my doubt in everything. If such a thing could happen and no one protested against it, who knows what can happen next, or where it will all end? (No. 129, male)

[I feel] a great disappointment toward the people of Israel. I believe the nation could have prevented it, and they avoided doing so because of an indifference and lack of interest, so they are a part of this crime. (No. 212, male)

Community ties and affiliations that were very important to the residents of Gush Katif—as they inhabited a deserted bloc of settlements far away from their families and were daily exposed to terrorism—facilitated a high level of commitment, cohesion, and support within the communities (Billig, 2005). As whole settlements and towns were destroyed without appropriate advance arrangements having been made for the absorption of evacuees, people were separated from old friends, neighbors, and the larger community. As described above, at the time of the study (around 6–15 months following the relocation), some people were staying in temporary dwellings whereas others were living in hotels; thus, the cohesion of the original communities was broken down. The primary emotions expressed in the context of a loss of a sense of belonging to the community were pain, longing, and sorrow. Anger toward the country combined with a loss of community ties and support clearly facilitated feelings of detachment and a sense of not belonging anywhere.

The Change and Loss of the Familiar Physical Environment

During the interviews, third of participants (around 31%) referred to the change in their physical environment and the loss they felt after having been forced to leave their familiar surroundings. The emotions most frequently mentioned were longing, pain, and difficulty in accepting the changes and getting used to their new surroundings.

I was exiled from heaven. My house was stolen. I was uprooted from my roots of 27 years in the area. The landscape, the weather, a nice big house which I built inch-by-inch with my own 10 fingers. (No. 233, Female)

The expulsion destroyed everything I knew and built in my life. I feel distant from everything and I can't find my place. As a student, I often lose my focus and attention, and I start day-dreaming about the old days there, imagining and thinking of my beloved landscape, which was a source of comfort when things were difficult. All of a sudden, none of it exists anymore. (No. 107, female)

The theme of "home" came up repeatedly and in different ways, including the physical place that was left behind, the buildings, and the roads. The common denominator of the home theme was the feeling of a vacuum, a deep attachment to a physical place that disappeared and could not be replaced.

The longing for the evacuated area was most likely amplified by two other factors that emerged throughout the narratives. The first factor was that due to political agreements, the area where peoples' homes once stood was no longer accessible to the former residents, and the houses and public infrastructures were purposely destroyed ("Suddenly it strikes me that I have no place to go back to. I even find it difficult to draw it in my imagination," No. 152). The second factor was that the relocation of people from high-standard living conditions to, at least temporarily, very low-standard living conditions may have contributed to the feelings of loss and mourning.

Not surprisingly, participants whose narratives expressed positive outcomes resulting from the relocation (32%), despite or sometimes as a result of their losses, (e.g., being able to move closer to family or being safer than they were in Gush Katif), made less mention of attachment to and longing for their old homes and surroundings than did those who expressed negative ones.

In sum, the three themes reflect a strong sense of disconnection and detachment from relationships with the physical place, the people, and the institutions. These relationships were perceived by participants as being extremely important in their lives before the relocation, when they served as a base for support and provided a sense of belonging.

Quantitative Findings

In order to portray the associations between the independent variables and the dependent variables, we examined a model that included both a) direct effects of each of the variables (place commitment, sense of belonging, and alienation) on post traumatic symptoms and well-being and b) indirect effects. We hypothesized that a greater level of place commitment would result in a greater sense of belonging to the people who would then help these individuals feel that they were a part of the country and its institutions, thereby resulting in lower post traumatic symptoms and higher well-being (See Figure 1). The rationale for portraying such associations was based on moving from a narrow circle to a wider one: commitment and a sense of belonging to a physical place, followed by a sense of belonging to the people of the country, followed by feelings toward the country in general and its institutions. No correlations between age, gender, and education and the dependent variables (post traumatic symptoms and well-being) were found; therefore, these variables were not entered as control variables. Due to the high and prolonged exposure to terror that this population previously experienced, we included direct paths between earlier traumatic life events and post traumatic symptoms and well-being.

Examining this model revealed that, whereas the NFI (Normed Fit Index 0.975) and CFI (Comparative Fit Measure 0.981) indi-

cated a good fit, RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) was too high (0.090) and the direct effects of the sense of belonging on post traumatic symptoms and well-being were not significant. In order to improve the model fit, we dropped these two paths from the model and added the path from place commitment to alienation, which resulted in good fit indices (NFI = 0.971, CFI = 0.985, RMSEA = 0.064, $\chi^2 = 8.12$, $df = 4$, $p < .087$ Confidence interval is between .000 and .127). See Figure 2 for the final model.

To examine whether there are mediation effects, the Bootstrap procedure (Efron & Tibshirani, 1993) was conducted. Table 1 presents the significance of the direct, indirect, and total effects for the standardized estimates.

The findings reveal that feeling of belonging to one's country was a partial mediator of the associations between commitment to the place and alienation: the direct effect between place commitment and alienation was significant ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < .01$); the negative indirect effect through a sense of belonging was significant ($\beta = -0.31$, $p < .1$); and the total effect was not significant ($\beta = -0.05$, $p > .05$).

A feeling of alienation was a full mediator of the associations between a sense of belonging to one's country and post traumatic symptoms and well-being: the only significant path was the negative indirect effect between a sense of belonging through alienation ($\beta = -0.13$, $p < .05$). Both the direct effect ($\beta = 0.03$, $p > .05$) and the total effect were not significant (-0.10 , $p > .05$).

Alienation was a full mediator of the associations between a sense of belonging to the country and well-being: the indirect path between sense of belonging through alienation was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.14$, $p < .05$). The direct effect ($\beta = -0.11$, $p > .05$) and the total effect ($\beta = 0.03$, $p > .05$) were not significant.

Discussion

This study used a mixed model method to analyze multiple losses of resources and attachment to country (Israel) and their contribution to post traumatic symptoms and well-being following the forced relocation from the Gaza Strip. Whereas the characteristics of this event are unique, loss of physical land can undermine an individual's sense of belonging and can lead to the development of alienation from the country's institutions during subsequent

collective traumatic events, such as wars, natural disasters, terror attacks, or community mass shootings. In all of these events, there is the potential to lose an entire community, as its members may feel estranged from the wider community. These individuals may feel troubled by the lack of assistance and aid received from officials, and they may not feel their situation is being sufficiently recognized or properly addressed. The limited acknowledgment of the loss of community resources in collective trauma is emphasized in the work of Cordasco et al., (2007). Although they reported that their interviews with evacuees following Hurricane Katrina did not include specific queries about feelings of trust and distrust toward the authorities, they were struck by the frequency and intensity of the distrust that was expressed in the interviewees' spontaneous statements.

Both analyses methods of the current study highlighted losses in three spheres of belonging: to the physical entity of the region, to the people in the country who separated themselves from the traumatized community, and to the country's formal institutions and authorities. The following parts will review the losses in each sphere and will demonstrate their combined contribution.

The loss of a sense of belonging to the land can be expected in cases of forced relocation. It can also be expected in natural disasters, such as floods and earthquakes, in which the land is directly damaged or destroyed. The participants' descriptions emphasized the symbolic attachment they had felt toward a specific place, a concept that is sometimes defined as place attachment (Billig, 2006; Giuliani & Feldman, 1993; Low, 1992; Mesch & Manor, 1998; Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum, 2008). According to Bowlby (1973), attachment to a place, like attachment to a person, can be conceptualized as a series of emotions and behaviors that modulate distance from and hence maintain contact with the object of attachment. This place of attachment is a source of protection and satisfaction. People require a satisfactory environment in which to live. They also require a sense of belonging, something that is necessary for their psychological well-being and that depends on strong, well-developed relationships with their environment (Fullilove, 1996). In this situation, place attachment was found to be associated with the desire to stay and live in the Gaza Strip. Another study that looked at the relocated population found that a sense of belonging was

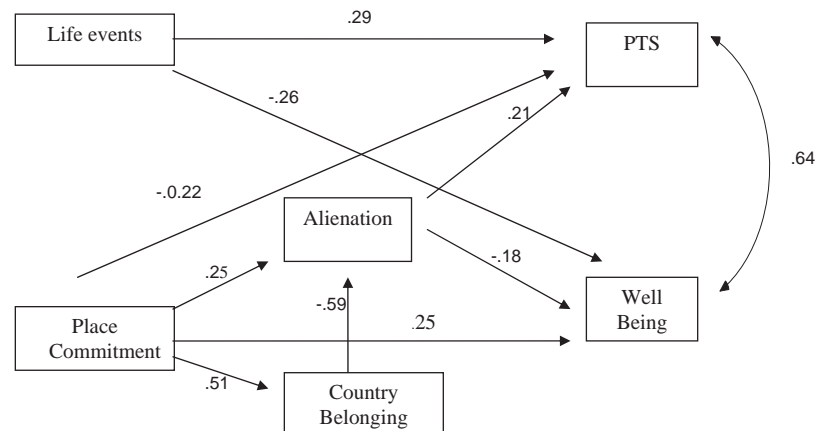


Figure 2. Empirical model for predicting Post Traumatic Symptoms (PTS) and Well-Being.

Table 1
Summary of Standardized Coefficients for the Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects

	Alienation	PTS	WB
Place commitment			
Direct effect	0.26 (0.07)**	-0.24 (0.10)*	0.31 (0.09)**
Indirect effect	-0.31 (0.06)**	0.01 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)
Total effect	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.23 (0.08)**	0.27 (0.07)**
Belonging to the country			
Direct effect	-0.60 (0.08)**	0.03 (0.10)	-0.11 (0.10)
Indirect effect	—	-0.13 (0.07)*	0.14 (0.07)*
Total effect	-0.60 (0.08)**	-0.10 (0.08)	0.03 (0.08)

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

associated with a lower risk perception of life in this area (Billig, 2006). Similarly, in the quantitative part of our research this aspect was manifested in the commitment to the place: the desire to stay and to live in these parts of the land, which were directly associated with higher well-being and lower post traumatic symptoms.

The loss of a sense of belonging to the people of the country was the second type of loss of belonging, and it was evident in both the qualitative and quantitative parts of this study. The qualitative method highlighted the deep disappointment the settlers felt regarding their fellow countrymen's lack of empathy with their struggle and their pain. The quantitative method described a process in which a sense of belonging to the people of the wider community might have been a connective chain that could served as a mediator between place commitment and alienation.

Although in this paper we are discussing the concept of collective trauma, the term collective is a relative one; communities and collectives are always embedded in larger collectives. In this case, the people of Gush Katif felt that Israeli society as a whole did not identify with them and did not support their protest. The lack of identification in this particular situation might be explained by the differences in people's political orientations (Laufer, Shechory, & Solomon, 2009). However, in other circumstances, a lack of identification might stem from racial or class differences, a phenomenon experienced by New Orleans residents following Hurricane Katrina (Cordasco et al., 2007).

The third aspect—alienation—relates to belonging and feeling connected to the country's institutions and authorities. Extensive expressions of anger, betrayal, and disappointment were strongly expressed in the settlers' narratives. Whereas these feelings were to be expected regarding the decision and process of the relocation, the fact that they continued to exist in the relocation's aftermath speaks to the ongoing and long-lasting sense of alienation experienced by these individuals. A sense of alienation was directly related to higher levels of post traumatic symptoms and lower well-being. It also served as a mediator between place commitment and a sense of belonging to the people. Alienation is a crucial element to be aware of following disasters or mass traumas.

It is assumed that in cases of community trauma, the natural process of the trauma includes feelings of estrangement from the general society and a strengthening of internal community ties (Hobfoll, Canetti-Nisim, & Robert, 2006). However, this natural process could not take place in the context of the Gush Katif relocation, as the relocation itself caused the communities to fall apart. Whereas the communities acted as a source of support

during the period of extensive terror and the protest prior to the relocation, they were not available for the evacuees following the relocation, a loss that might have contributed to greater feelings of anger and distress.

This study highlights the importance of research and conceptualization of resources (and their loss) on the collective level. The three variables that were studied in the current paper are part of what Norris et al. (2008) termed "social capital." Social capital refers to the tendency of individuals to invest, access, and use resources embedded in social networks (such as their community or country) to gain returns (Lin, 2001). Social capital includes not only the support one obtains from friends and family but also encompasses relationships between individuals and their larger neighborhoods and communities (Perkins et al., 2002; Perkins & Long, 2002; Saegert & Winkel, 2004). Three key social psychological dimensions of social capital are thus sense of community, place attachment, and citizen participation. The three variables in our study—place attachment, sense of belonging to the community, and alienation—are strongly related to Norris et al.'s (2008) conceptualization, and our findings support their theoretical model and call for more attention on the collective level when studying communities in the aftermath of this type of trauma.

The three aspects—place attachment, sense of belonging, and alienation—can be seen as representing three different levels of resources, moving from the most concrete (connection to the physical surroundings) to an intermediate level (connection to the people) and finally to the most abstract level (connection to the country's ideas, values, and institutions). Moreover, it is not simply the quantity of available resources or the level of loss that determines how one copes with trauma (Hobfoll, 2001); the nature of the resource also plays an important role in the process of coping. Some losses are less reversible than others; others take longer to recover from. Specifically, losing one's house, like in the current study, is an irreversible loss, and attachment to a new place may take longer than recovering connections to the community or to the people. This would be even more complicated in a context that does not recognize the earlier losses of place, community, and belonging to the country as is the case in the current study. It also seems that different resources serve different psychological needs, such as trust, belonging, self-assurance, meaning, and others. Further research is needed in order to enrich our understanding of the subtle ways in which the different communal resources are influencing and mediating human responses to trauma and stress.

This study has several limitations. It is a cross sectional study that assessed the participants' attitudes only subsequent to the relocation; thus, their previous attitudes and feelings toward the land, the people, and the country were not known. Moreover, the study included a higher percentage of women than men. Also, despite the similarities in geographical distribution of the sample to the geographical distribution of the whole community, the sample was a targeted one and we therefore need to be cautious about generalizing from the data collected. In addition, whereas we asked people to refer to post traumatic symptoms in relation to the relocation only, we cannot rule out the possibility that their earlier exposure to terror colored their answers. Moreover, the fact that the authors are both part of the society in question and also the ones who analyzed the qualitative data could lead some to claim that there is a bias in the findings; however, it should be noted that the data was reviewed by both authors separately and, as shown earlier, there is a match between the qualitative and the quantitative data. Finally, despite the relevance of the concepts, the study described a specific context of political relocation with a unique population.

In order to prepare communities to better cope with traumatic events, and in order to access social capital, the local people—a primary resource of any community—must be engaged meaningfully during each step of the process (Norris et al., 2008). Supported by professional practitioners as necessary, community members must assess and address their own vulnerabilities to hazardous and difficult situations, identify and invest in their own networks of assistance and information, and enhance their own capacities to cope and solve problems. This process could help strengthen the community's resources and limit the loss of attachment and belonging both to one's own community and to the wider community as well.

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