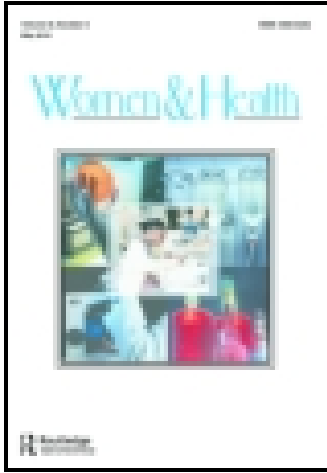


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Does Home Attachment Contribute to Strengthen Sense of Coherence in Times of War? Perspectives of Jewish Israeli Mothers

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The perceptions of home, the significance attached to the home, and the reasons for the decision to continue living at home despite past and potentially future threats were investigated among Jewish Israeli mothers whose homes were exposed to long-term rocket attacks. Findings showed that the mothers expressed a firm attachment to their homes and to their physical and social surroundings and indicated that home attachment, in terms of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors connected to home, contributed to the strengthening of their sense of coherence due to the comprehension, management, and the meaning that they accorded the situation. These components of sense of coherence served as assets and coping resources that helped the women handle their stressful situations.

KEYWORDS *home attachment, Israel, mothers, political violence, qualitative research, sense of coherence*

INTRODUCTION

Home is a charged construct, as well as one that is rich in psychological, social, and cultural meanings (Mallet 2004). For most people home offers a respite, a place to “let go,” alone or within familiar and trusted relationships (Darke 1994). An important concept firmly connected to “home” is “place

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attachment,” which is defined as an emotional, cognitive, and behavioral bond with a certain place and which provides an individual with a sense of both security and satisfaction (Fullilove 1996). When a person lives in a particular locale over an extended period, that place becomes an anchor of identity (Hay 1998). Morgan (2010) suggested that place attachment, which is reflected in childhood memories, is an important component of identity. Others have suggested that other places besides the one in which we were born and grew up can be linked with a sense of warmth and belonging (Gustafson 2001), as well as negative and/or ambivalent feelings (Manzo 2005). Little research exists about how negative or ambivalent feelings contribute to one’s perception and meaning of home, and in most cases, this literature has been in the context of feminist writing (McDowell 1999). Moreover, place meaning seems to be influenced not just by individual experience, but also the socio-cultural and political context in which place meaning develops (Manzo 2005).

The literature dealing with the ability of civilians to cope with terror and war suggests that women are more vulnerable than men to internalizing the associated psychological problems (Braun-Lewensohn et al. 2010). They plan and engage in general problem-focused coping, use active coping and seeking social support for instrumental reasons (Tamres, Janicki, and Helgeson 2002). Women also crave more social support for emotional reasons, engage in positive reappraisal and wishful thinking, ruminate, employ positive self-talk, and use avoidance. In the Israeli context, in comparison to men, a greater number of Israeli women used both problem-focused as well as emotional-focused coping methods (Zeidner 2006).

The current research project examined the perception of home in time of war, a topic that has not been researched intensively. We looked into the ways mothers described their perceptions and the significance of their homes while under the threat of war and missile attacks. We analyzed the factors that the women reported affected their attachment to home within the framework of SOC, which serves as a coping resource in stressful situations (Eriksson and Lindström 2007), and thus we suggest an integrated dialogue between these two concepts, which to date, have been discussed separately in the literature. Examining the contribution of “home attachment” to sense of coherence (SOC) is a unique way of addressing the issue of women’s health and how women cope in times of stress.

The Salutogenic Model and Sense of Coherence

The salutogenic model was initiated by Antonovsky (1987) as a tool to study the factors determining tension management. Its core concept, sense of coherence (SOC), is a construct strongly related to health and quality of life. SOC is a global disposition, present in everyday life that conditions how an individual reacts to life’s demands and the extent to which those demands

affect him/her. It is highly influenced by the context in which one lives, including one's culture, social structure, historical roots, as well as personal experiences (Antonovsky 1987). SOC is composed of three tightly interrelated dimensions that together, play a fundamental role in successful coping (Antonovsky 1987): *comprehensibility*, the capacity to perceive the world and life events as understandable, ordered, and to some extent, predictable; *manageability*, the confidence that one has the necessary resources to deal with environmental demands successfully; and *meaningfulness*, the belief that life is worthwhile and that the challenges in life deserve the investment of effort and resources. Bolstered by the tendency to perceive the world as meaningful and manageable, individuals with a strong SOC will be less likely to feel threatened by stressful events and, hence, will be better equipped to adjust to them (Eriksson, Lindstrom, and Lilja 2007).

Studies among populations exposed to acute and chronic missile attacks or other political violence have found that personal SOC is an important coping resource (Braun-Lewensohn and Sagy 2011). However, it also appears that when faced with long-term political violence, SOC can be fragile and may deteriorate over time (Braun-Lewensohn and Sagy 2010), which would indicate a need to examine how one can conserve SOC despite difficult times of political violence. While Antonovsky (1987) suggested that SOC stabilized around the age of 30 years, recent studies have shown that it continues to strengthen throughout life (Braun-Lewensohn and Sagy 2014). Thus, it is also important to examine SOC and what contributes to it among adults.

Perceptions and Meanings of Home During Tranquil and Turbulent Times

For its residents, home is not merely an object or a building, but a complex condition, integrating memories and images; desires and fears (Rullo 1987); and a set of rituals, personal rhythms, and routines of everyday life (Pallasmaa 1995). Moreover, home provides security in terms of safety from external threats and stability that enables the inhabitants to exercise control over their activities and in a world that, in many instances, proves unpredictable and threatening (Dovey 2005). These factors link it to the comprehensibility component of SOC. In addition, a nexus exists between "home" and the notions of identity, intimacy, warmth, protection, love, and emotion, as well as negative experiences (Kuribayashi and Tharp 1998), all of which encompass one's past experience, current state, and future aspirations (Magat 1999). These feelings are integrated into a sense of place attachment, defined as the experience of a long-term affective bond to a particular geographic area and the meaning attributed to this bond (Morgan 2010). These experiences can also provide individuals with meaningfulness, another component of SOC.

Researchers have noted the connection between home and family (Jones 2000), and in most cases women view home as a protected haven (Somerville 1997), embedded in positive emotions (Gurney 1997). Bauman (2001) saw perceptions of home as being linked to the social environment (i.e., the local community, neighbors, and friends). Bauman also suggests that over time, the physical and psychological importance attached to homes becomes peripheral because the “home” becomes familiar and is assumed to be of permanent existence and taken for granted; yet, under extreme circumstances the importance and centrality of the home is once again realized or questioned.

Women are usually in charge of performing traditional housework chores, and the time spent by women in handling these chores is almost thrice as much as that of men (Lewin-Epstein, Stier, and Braun 2006). Therefore, women’s feelings and behavior regarding their capability to rule the house and cope in stressful situations at home are strongly linked to their sense of manageability.

The most prevalent causes of the shift from the peripheral to the central importance of home noted in the literature appear in cases of natural catastrophes and displacement following war and terror. In the case of natural catastrophes, the forces of nature are unpredictable and non-negotiable, leaving the population at the total mercy of unconcerned and uninterested forces (López-Vázquez 2009). As for displacement following war and terror, these are noted to be zones of terror constructed either by states, paramilitary groups, or insurgent groups (Rapin 2011). Regardless, in the aftermath of such events people express vehement emotions towards their lost homes, augment the perceived importance of home, and express their strong desire to return home (Litvak-Hirsch and Cicurel 2008). Although not all of them go home, mothers in such conditions also express their wish to return (Robertson and Duckett 2007), as their most important task is to save their children and physically take care of them. Additionally, mothers connect their personal experiences with the collective experience, thus representing both the private as well as the collective spheres (Yuval-Davis 1993).

Women During Wartime Within the Jewish Israeli Context

In this research we chose to focus on Jewish Israeli women for several reasons: First, most of the studies of war refer to men and masculinity (Sjoberg 2009). Second, according to the literature, women are positively attached to their homes (Gurney 1997). Therefore, in the current research we were more interested in hearing mothers’ perspectives for attachment to home despite the circumstances of their long exposure to war and terror.

Billig’s research (2006) suggests that, in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Jewish religious women living in the occupied territories, whose homes were threatened by terrorist attacks, showed a strong

tendency to continue living in their homes since their perception of risk was relatively low as a result of their strong religious and ideological convictions. Alternatively, Jewish Israeli women in non-occupied areas were found to be more concerned about the disruption of their lives during war and the threat of injury to their family members and homes (Shalev and Freedman 2005).

While these studies have provided intriguing insights into the psychological reactions of individuals towards their families and homes during times of terror and war, they leave unanswered the question as to why mothers who have experienced long-term periods of exposure to missile attacks chose to remain in their homes and how their decision to stay helped them cope with the stressful situation. The current study aimed to examine the ways home attachment, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are related to home, as well as the decision to stay at home despite the danger, contributed to women's personal sense of coherence.

Research Background

During the years 2001–2009 residents of the Western Negev, who are highly diverse in terms of their economic and educational levels, occupational status, political affiliation, and levels of religiosity, were periodically bombarded by mortar and low grade rocket fire. From August 2005, the frequency and precision of attacks increased considerably. By 2008 more than 4000 rockets had hit the Negev, reaching areas previously unharmed, such as the larger cities of Beer-Sheva and Ashkelon and most of the small agricultural communities in the southern parts of the western Negev, killing civilians and causing damage to many houses. These attacks finally provoked the Israeli military operation "Cast-Lead" during 3 weeks in late December 2008 and early January 2009. As a result of this operation, and over the following years, the number of rockets decreased considerably, although a considerable number of missiles are still fired and continue to threaten the lives of those living in this area to the present. The current research focused on women from the city of Sderot and its surroundings. Sderot is located one kilometer from the Gaza Strip and was the main missile target for more than 10 years. Its population was strongly affected by missile attacks, physically (ruined houses), financially (lower values of houses, high unemployment), and psychologically (high rates of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder) (Haddad 2009). Estimates suggest that 10 percent to 25 percent of Sderot's residents have left the city to live elsewhere (Haddad 2009).

METHODS

Design

The snowball and convenience method of sampling was employed. The first author approached several mothers known to her from her work in the

regional college, asking them to participate and to request that their friends and neighbors participate as well. The criteria for participation in the research were being married and a mother of children under the age of 18 years, who, during the research period, had resided in the western Negev for at least 8 years. All mothers who attended the research met the above criteria and were working during the period of the research. All lived in houses with shelters built inside the house. We approached sixty women, and fifty-two agreed to take part in the research. The research protocol received institutional review board approval from an Israeli academic institute. All of the interviewees signed an informed consent form. Data collection took place between July and November 2009 and included two phases.

FIRST PHASE

At the initial phase, in July–August 2009, 6 months after Operation Cast Lead, fifty-two women answered a questionnaire that consisted of three open-ended questions:

1. What are your thoughts and feelings in relation to your home?
2. Do you consider leaving your home? If yes, please explain why; if no, please explain why.
3. What motivates you to stay in your home?

At the end of the questionnaire, we notified participants that if they were interested in being interviewed for the second part of the study, they could write down their names and telephone numbers and/or email address.

SECOND PHASE

Out of the twenty mothers agreeing to be interviewed, fifteen mothers were residents of Sderot. Therefore, it was decided to interview only Sderot residents. Five women canceled the interviews for technical reasons, such as lack of time, thus ten were interviewed. The first author conducted the interviews, which took 1–2 hours each. We asked interviewees to describe their homes; to share their experiences, before, during, and after Operation Cast Lead in relation to their homes; their reasons for staying or leaving home before and during Operation Cast Lead; and their current feelings about their homes at the time of the interview. The interviews were conducted in Hebrew, taped and transcribed word by word. The quotes presented here were translated to English by a bilingual translator, for whom English is her native language and is a fluent Hebrew speaker, and then back-translated into Hebrew for quality control. No discrepancies in meaning were found.

Data Analysis

The answers to the open-ended questionnaire and the transcripts of the interviews were first coded by each of the authors independently. The researchers met to discuss the coding scheme, with discrepancies resolved through discussion. Mayring's (2000) qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the answers to the open-ended questionnaire, and the thematic approach (Lieblich, Tuval, and Zilber 1998) served to identify the main themes from the interviews. These themes were found to reflect the SOC components. Therefore, the results are organized according to two research questions: Why did the mothers stay in their homes despite the danger? In what ways did home attachment contribute to the sense of SOC?

RESULTS

Participants were fifty-two mothers, ranging in age from 30 to 45 years. Twenty-two lived in the city of Sderot; the remaining thirty women lived in Kibbutzim and Moshavim roughly 20 kilometers south of the Gaza Strip and had been directly exposed to missile attacks since 2008, that is, before and during Operation Cast Lead. All mothers defined themselves as secular Jews; all were employed at the time of the interview, and all were of middle to high socioeconomic status. About half of them had college degrees and the rest had completed high school.

Why Did They Stay in Their Homes?

To answer this question, we used the findings obtained from the written questionnaires which were backed up with quotes from the interviews (see [Table 1](#)).

The themes manifested in the open-ended questionnaire questions, to a large degree, echoed those appearing in the interviews, and also pointed to the reasons the mothers identified as leading to their decision to stay in their homes, despite the clear and present danger. Concerning the question "What are your thoughts and feelings in relation to your home?" 87 percent of the women suggested that "home is the center of my life." Regarding the perception of home after the war, two main themes appeared, each noted by 40 percent of the respondents: "the war did not change my feelings," suggesting that the home remained a place loved and appreciated, and "home was not safe" indicating the assumption of a continued threat and concern, especially for the children's safety. The other two themes, each noted by 10 percent of the respondents were "ambivalence" signaling the uncertainty about the security of home, and "home is safe again" denoting the sense that the war was over. A dynamic interplay of fear and insecurity at home

TABLE 1 Summary of the Themes That Contributed to SOC

| SOC | Themes |
|---|--|
| <p>Comprehensibility</p> <p>The capacity to perceive the world and life events as understandable, ordered, and, to some extent, predictable</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding the aim of the war and being willing to pay the price and stay at home. 2. Predictability: Hope and belief in peace that will enable a more predictably quiet life at home. |
| <p>Manageability</p> <p>The confidence that one has the necessary resources to deal with environmental demands successfully</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Existence and preparation of the shelter (MAMAD). 2. Keeping the routine of managing home and family. 3. The decision to buy a house and stay in Sderot. 4. Connection and attachment to home as a coping resource. 5. Connection and responsibility to physical and social environment as a coping resource. |
| <p>Meaningfulness</p> <p>The belief that life is worthwhile and that the challenges in life deserve the investment of effort and resources.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Home itself was perceived as a source of meaningfulness in life, which was strengthened after the war. Future plans at home: maintenance, renovation. 2. Sense of meaningfulness as mothers—coping at home for the sake of the children. 3. Sense of patriotism and Zionism |

alongside relieved feelings when the direct threat lessened was also present in many of the interviews. This is evident in the words of 35-year-old Hagit: “I am still afraid, especially when I hear a sound that resembles the sirens, but now I feel much better at home, I can relax. . . .”

The intentions to leave home were found to diverge. Of the participants, 30 percent declared that “no war is a good enough reason to leave home” and an additional 26 percent of them pointed out that they “felt good at home and in the community.” This mode of reflection is evident in the words of Yael, a 42-year-old: “I love my community and I also feel in some ways responsible to my community; if we leave town and many more families leave, there will be no town.” Patriotic reasons for staying at home were noted among 18 percent of all respondents who also stated that every place in Israel is potentially exposed to the threat of terror and war. Some of the interviewees mentioned their parents, who came to Israel and experienced many difficult years to build the country for their children, as a reason to stay, despite the danger. For example, Dorit, a 38-year-old, said: “During the war, I felt connected to my parents, who passed away a few years ago. They built this country and went through wars and hard times. How can I

leave? I asked myself if they worked so hard to build this country for me, and this strengthened me and made me stay at home.” Finally, 20 percent of all respondents contended that in case of a worsening security situation, they would consider the possibility of leaving their homes, as did 33-year-old Hadar, stating: “I am not sure I will be able to stay here any longer if the situation gets worse, I really do not know.”

The motivations for staying at home fell within two dominant themes: “love of place and people” and “proximity to family and friends” (65 percent and 56 percent of all respondents, respectively). Some mothers discussed the importance of friends as a source of strength for their children. For example, Dalia said: “It was important for my children to stay with their friends. They love them and strengthen them, and they are the only ones who really understand what is going on here and how they feel.” To a lesser degree, the themes “proximity of home to work and to the children’s schools and/or kindergartens” and “cannot leave for economic reasons” were mentioned (33 percent and 16 percent of all respondents, respectively). This was the case with 42-year-old Liat, who explained: “I have a good job here, and I am not sure I can find a good job somewhere else, so I am not leaving so fast.”

In What Ways Did “Home Attachment” Contribute to the Sense of SOC?

To answer this question, themes from the interviews are organized according to SOC components.

COMPREHENSIBILITY

Understanding. The women¹ discussed their understanding of the unpleasant situation of war and suggested that their attachment to their homes helped them cope with the situation. Dina stated: “My home is my anchor; to me it represents security, stability . . . it is the place where my family lives, a place where we feel protected and these feelings intensified during the times of threat and danger.” Hadar said: “I am not happy with the war but I understand it and accept it, if we have to pay the price we will and I will stay at home regardless of the threat. My love of my home and understanding of the situation are very helpful. Ronit explained the situation as she understood it. She said: “For many years they shot missiles at our homes, so the aim of the war was to stop it and I understand it, it make sense to me. . . .” and later on she added: “We bought this house here; we did not know that the situation was going to be so bad, but we love our home, it is our little haven with all the difficulties, so we cope and stay. . . .”

Predictability. Some of the women discussed their hope and belief in peace or at least for an agreement that would enable them to live a more predictable life of peace and quiet in the area. Dina suggested that in her mind,

Operation Cast Lead was successful in securing a more peaceful period, yet she is cautious and wary of a future cycle of violence. Concurrently, she believed that “eventually some form of resolution would take place between Israel and the Hamas leadership in Gaza, so that both Israelis and Palestinians would live without their homes being threatened by war and terror.”

Nizan also expressed her wish for peace that would improve the lives of those residing across both sides of the border, stating: “I believe in peace. I tell people half jokingly that in my heart resides a little white dove which will one day cross these borders safely.” All of these women expressed the “comprehensibility” aspect of “sense of coherence” when facing the war situation. Thus, it seems that in spite of the chaos, the women felt that their attachments to their homes were sources of security and stability. Moreover, the love and appreciation of their homes were foundations for greater understanding of the situation and the belief that the situation would eventually be more predictable via peace or agreement processes.

MANAGEABILITY

Shelter. All mothers shared stories of fearful experiences during the war: fear of physical damage to their homes, threat of harm to their children, and anxiety about the unremitting ongoing terror. However, in the interviews, the mothers discussed thoughts and behavior in relation to their homes, which strengthened their awareness of their ability to cope with the stressful situation. For example, the shelter—Mamad (a safe room, mandatory in all houses built in Israel from 1992 onwards) and its preparedness for times of danger was mentioned in all of the interviews as a source of security. The mothers claimed that they were much more confident in their ability to protect their families because of the existence of the shelter—Mamad in the house. Amira claimed: “The knowledge that my home is equipped with a Mamad helps me to cope with the thought that my home is not safe, but I know what to do; everything is ready and in a few seconds we are in the Mamad.” Inbal added that for a few months “the whole family slept in the Mamad and it made us feel safer in our home.” Dina related to the current situation (at the time of the interview) stressing the importance of the Mamad: “We feel much better now; our safe room is ready and we know exactly what to do when we hear the siren. Our home has returned to being a safe place, at least for the present”

Keeping to a routine in a threatening period. The women stressed the need for routine at home both for their children and for themselves. Keeping the routine was perceived as helpful in buttressing the feeling of being “in control” regardless of the menacing situation. For example, Leora noted: “It was very important for me to continue with the routine at home, cleaning, homework, dinners . . . so I felt that I was in control.” Liat suggested that “keeping the routine at home is very helpful. When there was a siren we went to the Mamad, but then we came out and continued with life. . . .”

The decision to stay. The option to buy a home and live in the area was emphatically expressed by some of the mothers. For example, Nitzan said: “I had this motto, which I reiterated to myself and others—I chose to stay here. I could have left and lived somewhere else, but I chose to stay. . . . This is my place, for good and for bad. . . .”

Nitzan, like some other mothers, felt that she was capable of coping with the situation due to her conscious choice and this gave her some feeling of control over her life and an ability to cope despite the difficult situations.

Connection to home as a coping resource. Some women were ambivalent about staying or leaving home in a minatory situation and it was their attachment to their homes that functioned as a protected resource, as Inbal suggested. “I can tell you many stories about the rockets and about the fear. I remember one day, when a rocket fell close by, and the impact shattered the windows of my home as well the table situated where we’re now sitting. I was sitting with the children at the table. I could not face it [the bombings] any longer. I packed two suitcases and we went to stay at my mom’s home in Beer Sheva. The next morning the siren was heard there too, so we drove north to Tel Aviv. Three days later we returned to our home. I missed my home, my bed, my shower. Getting back felt right, I could cope with it here, although it was frightening.”

Connection and responsibility to the physical and social environment as a coping resource. Liat asserted: “I feel we live a good life here—the friends, the open surroundings, the quiet life of a small town, the weather, and my home. I feel good here despite the security threat; this is the source of my ambivalence. . . .” Dina cited her family’s attachment to the community, as well as the social pressure to remain, stating: “I felt a sense of responsibility towards my friends and my community. Each family staying here is important; we support each other . . . and also the kids love their friends and are supported by them. . . . If we had left we would have felt lonely, and our children would have been treated as “traitors” by their friends who remained. These feelings of connection and responsibility toward the community, sometimes also due to social pressure, served as catalysts for staying, regardless of the ambivalence and the constant fear as these feelings represented a coping resource for the mothers who had to deal with stressful situations.

MEANINGFULNESS

The private family sphere and the collective national sphere were found to reflect the interrelated aspects of home and meaningfulness.

Home as a source of meaningfulness. The women discussed instances related to the buying and/or building of their homes; some planned future renovations, and others shared their plans to move to a bigger house in the area. Some mentioned that as a result of the frightening experiences and their decision to stay, the home became more meaningful. Noa, for example,

said: "I realized how important this house is for me, and the war somehow made it even more important," and Nitzan added: "I realize how lucky I am to have a home, a family and the war makes you more aware of the good things, the meaningful things in life."

Being a mother. In many interviews motherhood was perceived as the most important component of their lives. The mothers discussed their children's behavior during the war, and expressed concern about the psychological effects of the ongoing threatening situation. In some cases, mothers recalled experiences in which they perceived themselves as "coping well for the children" and/or in order "not to frighten them." Mothering and home were mentioned in many interviews as integrated concepts. For example, Leora said: "Being a mother is most important for me and I practice it mainly at home where I talk to the kids, take care of them, feed them. . . . During the war I felt that I had to be strong for them." Later, she added: "I think that as a human being I can cry and show that I am afraid. That is a natural response, but as a mother I was coping, I took the children to the Mamad; I played with them there; we cooked dinner . . . it was very meaningful for me."

Zionism and patriotism. Here the concept of home was extended to the perception of Israel as the collective home. Echoing others, Dina expressed a multigenerational voice, by referring to her parents, whom she described as proud Zionists who "built and fought for the country." This was echoed by Inbal who said: "There were moments when I felt I could not hold on any more. I wanted to escape, not to live here anymore . . . but then there were other moments when I said to myself, we have to be strong; we cannot escape; we will cope. If we were to run away each and every time this country is at war, then what?" Later, she added: "I am proud to be an Israeli, so maybe this is the price we have to pay, to stay. . . .".

DISCUSSION

The current study findings point to the existence of a reciprocal dialogue between home attachment and sense of coherence (SOC), among mothers who were living under the threat of missile attacks. Namely, home attachment contributes to women's SOC and at the same time the meaning of home, which is a component of SOC, contributes to home attachment. Thus, being married with children and getting support from their husbands and/or their friends and neighbors, ownership of a house, their education, and their ability to work and keep their jobs, in addition to their understanding of how to handle different situations at home in spite of the conflictual and threatening situations, all helped these women to cope well in the on-going politically violent situations.

More specifically, the comprehensibility component of SOC was strengthened through the understanding and justification of the war and its

aims. Justification of the war is part of the strong Israeli socialization, as well as the need to dissolve the dissonance in regard to the suffering of self and others as a result of war (Kimmerling 2005). This justification supported the women's decision to stay at home, which in turn strengthened their SOC. Another psychological mechanism employed to enhance comprehensibility was the hope for future peace or at least an arrangement that would insure a more predictable peaceful life in the area. This hope helped to improve their ability to cope while staying in their threatened homes. The second SOC component, manageability, was also strengthened in a variety of ways. Mothers actively attempted to secure their family's physical well-being by preparing rooms equipped for times of danger. Moreover, we suggest that they used their deliberate choice to stay at home and as far as possible, to sustain a routine, which served to enhance their sense of internal control in a situation where external control was not available. Likewise, they adhered to activities and social relations outside the home by anchoring the family's home within the larger community. Prior research results suggest that social relations and social support received from the community are connected to a high SOC (Volane et al. 2004). As for meaningfulness, two spheres of home attachment were apparent, the personal-family sphere and the collective sphere, which defines Israel as a collective home, and previous research has suggested that positive family relationships have contributed to strengthening SOC (Volane et al. 2004). Thus, it is no wonder that the mothers emphasized the centrality of motherhood in their lives and claimed that coping for the family and especially for the children was perceived as worthwhile.

These aspects, which are more personal and social in nature, are closely linked to the wider cultural atmosphere within which the perceptions of home are constructed (Mallet 2004). In the current context, ideological and patriotic reasons for staying at home, despite the hardships endured, are shaped within the Jewish-Israeli culture. Israelis are expected to adjust to life under the constant threat of terror and adhere to the sober realization that "life must go on" (Sever et al. 2008). Acknowledging the risks inherent in living in Israel is one of the main themes in the Israeli collective narrative, along with the shared responsibility to contribute in various ways to the maintenance of the homeland (Zafran and Bar-Tal 2003). The findings suggest that the mothers displayed a complex mind set, ranging from feelings of safety and security at home, to feelings of fear and insecurity. Despite the fear, most women stressed the positive aspects of staying at home and in that way contributed to a positive coping resource. Therefore, in their decision to stay and cope with the stressful situation, the mothers were serving as a living example to their children, mirroring the way that their parents, who built the country, had functioned.

Limitations and Conclusions

The small number of participants, and the relatively small proportion of them who participated in the second phase of the study, limited the potential accuracy and generalizability of the findings, as well as potentially the ability to achieve saturation of these. However, within these limitations, the research enabled us to examine in-depth the integrative dialogue between the concepts of home attachment and SOC.

To conclude, the results of the current research suggested a new perspective of looking at women's health and coping processes during times of stress, through the lenses of salutogenesis, its core concept of SOC, and home attachment as a unique addition to the vast literature on coping mechanisms among women in general (Tamres, Janicki, and Helgeson 2002) and Israeli women in particular (Zeidner 2006). Our study results suggested that home attachment contributed to women's SOC, which served as a coping resource in time of stressful situations. Place attachment among mothers who experienced long-term threat of terror enhanced their SOC and therefore their ability to cope with stressful situations.

A growing number of the world's population reside in war zones (Rapin 2011) under the ever-present threat of losing their lives. The current findings suggest that, in professional/clinical settings, when working with mothers on enhancing coping resources and skills it is important to enhance their SOC, and one way of doing this is by focusing on home attachment. Future research is needed to determine whether fathers' modes of relating to home attachment and SOC are similar or different to the ones employed by mothers. Finally, the ongoing state of terror and war experienced by both Israelis and Palestinians, calls attention to the need to determine how Palestinian parents perceive their homes in times of threat and how they behave in relation to them.

NOTE

1. All of the names are pseudonyms.

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