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Risk-Resilience Dynamics of Ideological Factors in Distress After the Evacuation From Gush Katif

Julia Elad-Strenger

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel

Zvi Fajerman

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel and Sha'ar Hanegev Psychological Services Center, Israel

Moran Schiller

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel

Avi Besser

Sapir Academic College, Israel

Golan Shahar

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel and Yale University School of Medicine

The aim of the present study was to examine the role of ideological commitment and national attachment in distress experienced by Jewish evacuees from Gaza and the West Bank, Israel (“Gush Katif”), 6 years after their forced evacuation. Fifty-one evacuees from Israeli settlements in Gush Katif completed web-administered self-report questionnaires tapping their levels of ideological commitment, national attachment, and psychological distress.

Julia Elad-Strenger, Department of Psychology, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel; Zvi Fajerman, Department of Psychology, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel and Sha'ar Hanegev Psychological Services Center, D. N. Hof Ashkelon 79200, Israel; Moran Schiller, Department of Psychology, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel; Avi Besser, Department of Behavioral Sciences and Center for Research in Personality, Life Transitions, and Stressful Life Events, Sapir Academic College, D. N. Hof Ashkelon 79165, Israel; Golan Shahar, Department of Psychology, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel and Department of Psychiatry, Yale University School of Medicine.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Julia Elad-Strenger, Self & Health Lab (SEALTH), Department of Psychology, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva 84105, Israel. E-mail: juliastrenger@gmail.com

Ideological commitment was found to be positively associated with stress ($\beta = .33, p < .01$) and depression ($\beta = .25, p < .05$). On the other hand, national attachment was found to be negatively associated with stress ($\beta = -.24, p < .05$) and depression ($\beta = -.43, p < .001$). A statistically significant interaction was found between national attachment and ideological commitment such that when ideological commitment was high, national attachment was associated with lower levels of depression, but when national attachment was low, ideological commitment was associated with higher levels of depression. Our findings are consistent with the conceptualization of a complex vulnerability-resilience dynamic in which different facets of political ideology may have complex and sometimes contradicting effects on psychological well-being.

Keywords: vulnerability, resilience, stress, anxiety, ideological commitment, national attachment

Israel's disengagement plan from Gaza ("Gush Katif") and the northern West Bank, executed by the government, was implemented during August and September of 2005. Despite strong opposition from settlers and their supporters (Billig, Kohn, & Levav, 2006), approximately 8,500 settlers, most of whom were residents of Gush Katif, were removed from their homes and communities. In addition, support for them in the Israeli public had gradually diminished, leaving many settlers feeling betrayed and humiliated (Roth, 2005).

Jewish settlement in Gush Katif began in 1967 after Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and has increased dramatically after the establishment of the Gush Emunim movement ("Block of the Faithful") in February 1974. The 17 settlements comprising Gush Katif differed in their population size, economic level, and social composition (Billig et al., 2006). Most settlements were religious, of different degrees of orthodoxy, and the minority were secular (Dekel & Tuval-Mashiach, 2012). In terms of their motivations to settle in the area, the Israeli population in Gush Katif can be divided into two main groups: One group, which mainly consisted of ultrareligious Jews, settled the area for ideological reasons, believing it to be part of the land promised by God to the nation of Israel, whereas the other settled there as a result of financial or practical considerations. Specifically, many settlers were farmers who received high government subsidies to grow and export agricultural produce whereas some were mostly drawn to the physical landscape and communal lifestyle in the settlements (Schnell & Mishal, 2008). It should also be noted that some of the families settled in this area for both financial and ideological reasons (Holzer, 2009; Shamai, 2002).

Regardless of their initial motivation to settle in the area, the forced relocation can be viewed as a collective trauma for all former residents of Gush Katif (Dekel & Tuval-Mashiach, 2012). As in any forced relocation, the

relocation from Gush Katif involved the loss of residents' homes and livelihood, the loss of their known physical environment, and the collapse of familiar social networks. Such concentrated loss of resources can be particularly traumatic when it is neither chosen nor under the control of the evacuee (Hobfoll, 1989). Numerous studies on the effects of forced relocation after natural disasters, war, and political upheavals have shown that evacuees suffer a wide range of emotional and psychological symptoms in the short and the long term (for a review, see Dekel & Tuval-Mashiach, 2012).

In addition to the physical and social resource loss experienced by victims of forced relocation, in various contexts, the evacuation from Gush Katif also entailed a potential threat to settlers' beliefs and values. Even if religious or ideological motivations were secondary factors in their decision to settle there, over their years of residence in Gush Katif many settlers developed an ideological orientation. Raising families in this area and becoming attached to the place supported a process of adopting the belief that this part of the country is the "Promised Land" of Israel (Shamai, 2002). Also, over time, most settlers became ideologically committed to the security strategies that led earlier governments to settle Gaza and threw all of their weight into the political scales against Israeli disengagement whenever and as long as that question was raised (Billig et al., 2006; Schnell & Mishal, 2008). In other words, most residents of Gush Katif ultimately adopted nationalistic right-wing views, characterized by deep patriotic sentiments and strong opposition to territorial compromise (Filc, 2010). Thus, from the settlers' perspective, prospects of withdrawal ("uprooting") from the territories represented a severe and continuous threat on the symbolic level—challenging their values and beliefs—and on the concrete level—conceding to Palestinian violence and experiencing severe resource loss (Hirschberger & Ein-dor, 2006).

Studies conducted before the evacuation found settlers to be at high risk for the development of emotional distress (Hall et al., 2008; Hobfoll et al., 2007). Similar results were found in the years after the evacuation. In a study conducted during the first year after the disengagement was performed, 40% of evacuees met the clinical criteria of probable posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Oren & Possick, 2010). These findings are consistent with reports on resource loss as a predictor of PTSD and depression among victims of mass trauma caused by terrorism, mass violence, natural disasters, and forced immigration (e.g., Besser & Neria, 2010, 2012; Finklestein & Solomon, 2009; Hobfoll, Canetti-Nisim, & Johnson, 2006; Neria, Besser, Kipper, & Westphal, 2010).

It is interesting to note that many studies have shown that female settlers suffered more severe symptoms after the evacuation as compared with their male counterparts. Specifically, women reported higher levels of distress (Laufer et al., 2009), posttraumatic stress (Nuttman-Shwartz, Dekel, & Tu-

val-Mashiach, 2010), and anxiety (Ben-Zur & Gilbar, 2011). According to Ben-Zur and Gilbar (2011), these findings could reflect greater concern on the part of women about political/security threats or suggest that women may be better in identifying, and more candid about reporting, feelings of anxiety and depression.

Most importantly, there is some evidence to suggest that the high prevalence of distress among evacuees may be attributed, in part, to the trauma they have experienced on the ideologic and symbolic level (Schnell & Mishal, 2005). Although ideological convictions might help maintain psychological equanimity and give meaning to extreme traumatic events (e.g., Punamäki, Qouta, & El-Sarraj, 2001), ideological commitment may also function as a vulnerability factor in coping with political stressors. Strong ideological commitment among Jewish settlers was specifically found to be positively associated with distress (Laor et al., 2006; Laufer, Shechory, & Solomon, 2009). In an attempt to explain these mixed findings, Laufer and her colleagues (2009) postulated that the effects of ideological commitment on mental health are dependent on the content of ideology. On the basis of Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway (2003), Laufer and her colleagues specifically posit that because right-wing ideologies are associated with uncertainty avoidance and closed mindedness, strong commitment to right-wing ideologies impede the individual's ability to cope with changes in the political reality.

The aforementioned findings point to the importance of differentiating between the content and the intensity of a belief, particularly when examining right-wing positions. Although research shows that the content-laden dimensions of ideology (the specific beliefs that constitute an ideology) may interact with their content-free dimension (the intensity of the beliefs) in their effect on mental health, some studies suggests that ideological beliefs may be considered vulnerability- or resilience-related factors, independent of their intensity. For example, Laufer and her colleagues (2009) found higher distress levels among right-wing adolescent settlers during evacuation of settlements compared with the response to Palestinian terror. Likewise, Shamai (2002) found that levels of distress among right-wing settlers in Judea and Samaria were more intense during the period of the Oslo Agreement and when the left-wing Israeli government was in power than during the terror attacks that occurred when the right-wing government was in power.

These findings are consistent with the theoretical framework of shattered assumptions proposed by Janoff-Bulman (1992), according to which the more a trauma shatters victims' worldview, the more it will lead to PTSD and depression. The evacuation—which above all threatens the legitimacy of their worldview—forces settlers to face a shattered ideological platform and exposes them to far higher emotional distress. Therefore, the gap between

political reality and ideological belief of itself constitutes an additional stressor with which the evacuees are required to cope.

Taken together, these findings support the hypothesis that feelings of distress experienced as a result of political stressors are stronger when the political reality is not compatible with the ideological assumptions, particularly when one's commitment to these assumptions is high. Hence, on the basis of the aforementioned studies, it seems that the content-laden dimensions of settlers' ideology (right-wing worldviews) and its content-free dimension (ideological commitment) function as vulnerability factors in the development of distress in light of stressors that contradict their worldview.

However, is it possible that the content-laden and content-free dimensions of ideology may have inconsistent effects on mental health? Vulnerability-resilience research implies that many of the psychosocial factors that are classified into clear-cut, vulnerability versus resilience categories actually embed elements of both. This complex vulnerability-resilience dynamic was well exemplified in several psychosocial dimensions, such as dependency, self-concept, social support, positive life events, and passive coping strategies (for a review, see Shahar, Elad-Strenger, & Heinrich, 2012). It has also been demonstrated with regard to ideology-related variables, such as religiosity. Religiosity was specifically found to have beneficial and detrimental effects on mental health. An intrinsic orientation toward religion was associated with higher levels of psychological well-being, whereas extrinsic religiosity was associated with higher levels of depression and lower levels of self-esteem (e.g., Maltby & Day, 2000). Such a complex vulnerability-resilience dynamic has thus far never been demonstrated with regard to other ideologically related variables.

Looking at the content of settlers' ideology, one may identify a deep ideological theme that ties together many of its various elements that constitute right-wing ideology. Most residents of Gush Katif originally settled in these areas out of deep commitment to their national mission. Most Gush Katif 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 vision—the vision of Greater Israel¹ (Dekel & Tuval-Mashiach, 2012). Research indicates that such nationalistic values may function as a buffer of psychological distress (Sellers & Shelton, 2003), and it is possible that they have also buffered the deleterious consequences of the evacuation on Gush Katif evacuees in that it helped them make sense of, or provide meaning to, the betrayal of the establishment in their national vision for Israel.

Nevertheless, nationalism may be regarded as but one dimension of a more complex ideological entity, “national attachment,” which captures

¹ This is but one perspective on the Zionist vision. For an historical account of different conceptions of Zionism, see Avineri (1981).

attitudinal and emotional aspects of ideology (Sidanius, Feshbach, Levin, & Pratto, 1997). Sidanius and his colleagues (1997) posited that national attachment consists of four dimensions: (a) nationalism, concerning the desire for the dominance of one's own nation over others; (b) patriotism, pertaining to one's love of country and its major symbols; (c) attachment to place, which expresses one's emotional attachment to the nation as a physical place and the place they grew up; and (d) concern for co-nationals, which pertains to one's concern for the people of the nation.

Research has shown that national attachment, as a specific content-laden dimension of ideology, may play an important role in promoting mental health. For example, a strong sense of mutual concern and community loyalty, as well as a strong feeling of "belonging to the country," were found to be associated with better emotional adjustment, greater levels of social support, and higher social connectedness (Fisher, Sonn, & Bishop, 2002). In a study on residents of coastal Louisiana after hurricanes Katrina and Rita, attachment to place was found to play an important role in facilitating resilience and community action in restorative processes (Burley, Jenkins, Laska, & Davis, 2007). Likewise, 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 (Dekel & Nuttman-Shwartz, 2009). In a recent study on evacuees from Gush Katif after their relocation (Dekel & Tuval-Mashiach, 2012), low place commitment and elevated alienation from the nation were found to be positively associated with posttraumatic symptoms and a reduced sense of well-being.

THE PRESENT STUDY

The aim of the present study was to examine the effects of ideological commitment and national attachment on the distress levels of evacuees from Gaza and the West Bank 6 years after the evacuation. On the basis of the theoretical and empirical literature review, the guiding hypothesis of this study was that (H_1) ideology may embed vulnerability- and resilience-related elements: (a) Whereas national attachment will be associated with lower levels of distress, (b) ideological commitment will be associated with higher levels of distress. We also hypothesized that (H_2) the two ideological predictors will interact in their effects on distress: (a) Strong national attachment is hypothesized to attenuate the effects of high ideological commitment on distress; conversely, (b) high ideological commitment is hypothesized to exacerbate the effects of low national attachment on distress.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The present study is unique for numerous reasons. First, it addresses an important gap in current knowledge about the association between ideologically related factors and mental health after collective trauma. In recent years, there seems to be a growing interest in studying the effects of community contexts on human welfare. Most notably, Shinn and Toohey (2003) suggest that psychologists have traditionally committed a “context minimization error” by ignoring the enduring important influences of neighborhood and community contexts on human behavior.

More specifically, findings from trauma studies point to the important role of social, environmental, and community resources in explaining and predicting the different responses that people will have to traumatic events as well as their ability to cope and adjust to them (Nuttman-Shwartz & Dekel, 2009). The present study further contributes to this literature by focusing on the effects of ideological resources on well-being after collective trauma.

Second, this study is novel in its emphasis on the potential vulnerability-resilience dynamics involved in the associations between ideology and distress. To the best of our knowledge, no studies have thus far examined the complex dialectics between ideological factors with potentially opposing effects on well-being. In particular, this study is the first to examine the interactive effects of ideological commitment and national attachment (the latter being a specific content-laden dimension of settlers’ ideology) on their well-being after trauma. Thus, this study contributes to the vulnerability-resilience literature by suggesting that ideological factors may include elements of vulnerability and resilience.

Finally, the present study uses a unique sample of political evacuees, a relatively closed community that has grown more and more suspicious of academic research over the years after the evacuation. The political and social context in which this study was conducted, namely, 6 years after this community’s forced relocation, may shed light on the long-term effects of their traumatic evacuation and its associations with their current ideological sentiments. Even today, evacuated settlers still suffer the effects of their traumatic relocation (Tuval-Mashiach & Dekel, 2012). Furthermore, the current political reality in Israel constantly contradicts settlers’ ideology, although their parties such as Habayit Hayehudi (“the Jewish home”) participate in Prime Minister Netanyahu’s coalition. Since the summer of 2009, Netanyahu has committed himself to a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine problem, which means that Israel will withdraw from the West Bank, and polls show that roughly two thirds of Israelis support this solution. In addition, the international community adamantly denies the legitimacy of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and consistently condemns any con-

struction in the settlements. Although most settlers continue to argue in favor of their vision, they have strong reason to believe that at some point they may have to leave their homes and that they will have to go through a trauma similar to the evacuated settlers from Gush Katif. Hence, it is likely that evacuees who still have strong commitment to their ideology may be highly vulnerable to its potential negative psychological consequences.

Finally, findings from this study could have important consequences for stress management and coping research, as well as clinical interventions that focus on adaptation to stressful life events, particularly political evacuation. Although the present study is based on a limited number of participants ($n = 51$), because of the difficulties involved in obtaining a sample of evacuees from Gush Katif who will be willing to share their thoughts on the evacuation years later, particularly in light of the current social atmosphere in Israel, the sample size is reasonable for the examination of relationships estimated by correlations and regression (Van Voorhis & Morgan, 2007).

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Of the 51 evacuees from Israeli settlements in Gush Katif who agreed to participate in the study and completed all questionnaires, 37 were women (73%) and 14 were men. The sample consisted of respondents whose ages ranged from 29 to 50 years ($M = 49.49$, $SD = 10.81$). Most participants were married (83%), religious (89%), and were residents of Gush Katif for over 10 years (75%). Thirty percent of participants had a bachelor's degree, 22% had an associate's degree, 17% were high school graduates, 12.5% had a master's degree, 5% had acquired theological education, 2% were graduates of doctoral programs, and the remainder did not specify.

Participants were recruited via a mailing list provided to the researchers by Vaad Mityashvey Gush Katif ("Committee for the Settlers of Gush Katif"), which initially contained 200 e-mail addresses. After removing duplicate addresses from the list, 120 e-mail messages, containing a link to anonymous questionnaire forms, were sent along with a request for participation and/or forwarding of the request to possibly interested acquaintances. Of the 120 e-mails sent, 28 e-mails were denied by the server and were deemed invalid. Of the 92 messages sent, 55% of participants acknowledged message receipt, agreed to participate in the study, and completed the questionnaires. All participants signed an electronic consent form before proceeding to complete the study questionnaires. As incentives for participation, researchers offered to make anonymous donations on participants' behalf to a social organization of their choice.

Measures

Background information was obtained using a questionnaire composed of background items on sex, age, marital status, formal education, years of residence in Gush Katif (categorized in clusters of 0–1 year, 1–3 years, 3–5 years, 5–8 years, 8–10 years, and over 10 years), and religious orientation (secular or religious).

The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) is a 21-item self-report questionnaire listing negative emotional symptoms and is divided into three subscales measuring depression (e.g., “I couldn’t seem to experience any positive feeling at all”), anxiety (e.g., “I was worried about situations where I might panic and make a fool of myself”), and stress (e.g., “I found it hard to wind down”). Participants rated the extent to which they have experienced each symptom over the past week on a 4-point scale ranging from 0 (*did not apply to me at all*) to 3 (*applied to me very much, or most of the time*). DASS subscales have been shown to have high internal consistency and to yield meaningful discriminations in various settings (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). High reliabilities were found in the present study for the total score ($\alpha = .96$) and for the depression ($\alpha = .92$), anxiety ($\alpha = .86$), and stress ($\alpha = .94$) subscales.

Ideological commitment (Solomon & Laufer, 2005) was analyzed using a 20-item measure consisting of statements rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*to a great extent*) to 4 (*not at all*) and assessing ideological commitment independently of specific political views. Factor analysis revealed three factors: (a) practical commitment (e.g., “I am willing to participate in demonstrations”), (b) ideological conviction (e.g., “I am convinced that I will hold to my current political view when I am older”), and (c) intolerance of other political views (e.g., “I think there are some political views that should not be heard”). The three factors were found to be reliable, with Cronbach’s α values ranging from .68 to .87 (Solomon & Laufer, 2005). The reliability of the total score, calculated as the mean of the participants’ responses on all items, was found to be adequate, with Cronbach’s α values ranging from .86 to .87 (Laufer et al., 2009). An adequate reliability score was obtained in the present study for the total score ($\alpha = .79$) whereas the three subscales yielded low to moderate reliability scores (practical commitment, $\alpha = .85$; ideological conviction, $\alpha = .47$; intolerance, $\alpha = .56$).

National attachment was assessed using a 21-item questionnaire developed by Sidanius and colleagues (1997). Questionnaire items were rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) and included four dimensions: nationalism (e.g., “To maintain our country’s superiority, war is sometimes necessary”), patriotism (e.g., “I have great love for my country”), attachment to place (e.g., “I feel no differently about the

place I grew up than any other place”), and concern for co-nationals (e.g., “I feel very warmly toward my countrymen”). Sidanius and colleagues (1997) found that all of these dimensions were significantly and positively correlated with one another. In the present study, adequate reliability was obtained for the total score, calculated as the mean of the subject’s responses on all items ($\alpha = .85$), whereas the questionnaire’s subscales yielded low to moderate reliabilities (nationalism, $\alpha = .65$; patriotism, $\alpha = .81$; attachment to place, $\alpha = .56$; and concern for co-nationals, $\alpha = .81$).

It is important to note that because reliability scores calculated for four of the questionnaires’ subscales (national attachment: nationalism and attachment to place; ideological commitment: ideological conviction and intolerance) were relatively low (Cronbach’s α ranging from .47 to .65), only total scores were included in this study’s statistical analyses. Moreover, the use of total scores reduced the number of predictors and the possibility of lowering power and increasing type I and II errors due to multiple analyses.

RESULTS

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the study variables are presented in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, and as expected, elevated national attachment was associated with low levels of DASS-depression ($r = -.40, p < .01$). Also as expected, elevated levels of ideological commitment were associated with high levels of DASS-stress ($r = .30, p < .05$). No statistically significant correlations with DASS-anxiety were found.

To test the possibility of interactions involving these ideological predictors and each of the DASS subscales, we used a series of general linear modeling (GLM) analyses. The three DASS subscales served as repeated-measure outcomes. In Block 1, national attachment and ideological commitment served as individual differences continuous predictors. In Block 2, a multi-

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among the Study Variables

	DASS-Depression	DASS-Stress	DASS-Anxiety	NA	IC
DASS-depression	—				
DASS-stress	.82***	—			
DASS-anxiety	.70***	.79***	—		
NA	-.40**	-.20	-.05	—	
IC	.20	.30*	.13	.11	—
Range	0–3	0–3	0–3	1–7	1–4
<i>M</i>	5.15	6.72	2.78	5.42	3.08
<i>SD</i>	5.69	6.03	4.16	.83	.58

Note. $n = 51$. NA = national attachment; IC = ideological commitment.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ (one-tailed).

plicative interaction term representing an interaction between the two predictors was entered. Because we had clear, directional hypotheses, one-tailed tests of significance were used. Results for the GLM analyses are presented in Table 2.

Block 1 accounted for 22% of the variance in DASS-depression ($R^2 = .22$, $F_{[2,48]} = 7.13$, $p < .001$), 15% of the variance in DASS-stress ($R^2 = .15$, $F_{[2,48]} = 4.39$, $p < .01$), and a nonsignificant 2% of the variance in DASS-anxiety ($R^2 = .02$, $F_{[2,48]} = .59$, ns). The pattern of associations between the two predictors and the three outcomes was almost identical to the one presented by the putative correlations. National attachment was specifically associated with DASS-depression ($b = -2.99$, $SE = .87$, $\beta = -.43$, $t = -3.42$, $p < .001$, $d = .92$). In addition, national attachment was associated with DASS-stress ($b = -1.77$, $SE = .96$, $\beta = -.24$, $t = -1.82$, $p < .05$, $d = .79$). Likewise, ideological commitment was associated with elevated DASS-stress ($b = 3.46$, $SE = 1.37$, $\beta = .33$, $t = 2.52$, $p < .01$, $d = .87$) and DASS-depression ($b = 2.43$, $SE = 1.23$, $\beta = .25$, $t = 1.97$, $p < .05$, $d = .81$). Finally, DASS-anxiety was associated with neither of the ideological variables and therefore was not included in Table 2.

Block 2, including the two-way interaction,² added 7% to the explained variance in DASS-depression accounted for by the model ($R^2 = .29$, $F_{[3,47]} = 6.65$, $p < .01$), 1% to the variance in DASS-stress ($R^2 = .16$, $F_{[3,47]} = 3.07$, $p < .05$), and no additional variance to DASS-anxiety. A statistically significant interaction was evinced among national attachment, ideological commitment, and the repeated measure variable ($F_{[2,94]} = 3.64$, $p < .05$). Specifically, the two ideological, between-subject predictors interacted in the statistical prediction of DASS-depression ($b = -3.26$, $SE = 1.52$, $\beta = -.26$, $t = 2.14$, $p < .05$, $d = .66$).

The pattern of interaction is presented in Figure 1 per Aiken and West's (1991) suggestion for plotting interactions using simple slopes (i.e., showing the effects of x on y at various levels of z defined as the regression of the outcome y on the predictor x at a specific value of the moderator z). When ideological commitment was high (1 SD above the centered mean), the relationship between national attachment and DASS-depression was significant ($b = -4.55$, $SE = 1.10$, $\beta = -.66$, $t = -4.13$, $p < .01$, $d = .92$). When ideological commitment was low (1 SD below the centered mean), the relationship between national attachment and DASS-depression was nonsignificant ($b = -.77$, $SE = 1.32$, $\beta = -.11$, $t = -.58$, ns). Conversely, when national attachment was low (1 SD below the centered mean), the relationship between ideological commitment and DASS-depression was

² To control for collinearity of variables with their interaction term, centered versions of each variable were calculated and the interaction term based on the centered variables was entered into the regression model (Aiken and West, 1991).

Table 2. Results of Regression Analyses Pertaining to DASS-Depression and DASS-Stress

	DASS-Depression		DASS-Stress	
	<i>b</i>	β	<i>b</i>	β
Block 1				
NA	2.99***	-.43	-1.77*	-.24
IC	2.43*	.25	3.46**	.33
Block 2				
NA \times IC	-3.26*	-.26	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>

Note. $n = 51$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ (one tailed).

significant ($b = 4.74$, $SE = 1.59$, $\beta = .48$, $t = 2.97$, $p < .01$, $d = .86$). When national attachment was high (1 SD above the centered mean), the relationship between ideological commitment and DASS-depression was nonsignificant ($b = -.58$, $SE = 1.82$, $\beta = -.05$, $t = -.31$, ns).

In light of the relatively small sample size, power analyses (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003) and estimations of effect sizes (Cohen, 1988) were also performed. A general heuristic is that one should have no fewer than 50 participants for a correlation or regression, with the minimum number of participants increasing with the number of independent variables. For regression equations that involve three predictors (independent variables), as in the regressions performed in this study, an absolute minimum of 15 participants per predictor variable is appropriate. For the observed R^2 , given the probability level of .05, the two predictors, and the sample size of 51, the observed power (Cohen et al., 2003) was found to be between .68 and .97. The effect sizes found in this study (Cohen's d ranging from .66 to .92) are considered medium-large effects if Cohen's (1988) classification system was used.

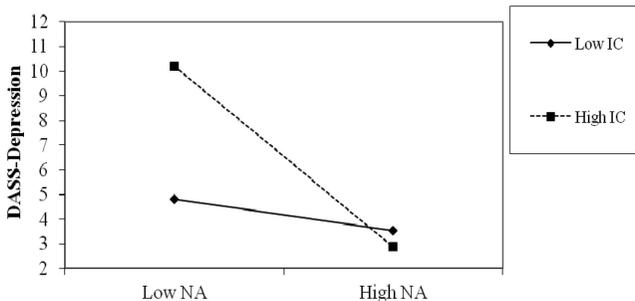


Figure 1. The interactive effect of ideological commitment and national attachment on depression. $n = 51$. NA = national attachment; IC = ideological commitment.

DISCUSSION

Consistent with our hypothesis and with previous findings (Laufer et al., 2009), ideological commitment was positively associated with distress among evacuated settlers. Ideological commitment was specifically positively associated with symptoms of stress. This association may be attributed to the sense of security, predictability, and certainty implied by strong ideological convictions. Although political ideology makes political stressors more comprehensive and less threatening (Laufer et al., 2009), when one's worldview is contradicted or threatened by political events ideology may fail to provide the sense of security that makes coping with stressors easier.

Ideological commitment also evinced a significant association with depression. The positive association between ideological commitment and depression may be attributed to the role of ideology in sustaining a sense of meaningfulness of life. Because one of the most important components of depression is the tendency to dwell on the possibility that life is meaningless, when a political stressor challenges the very foundations of one's worldview, depression may result. This view is consistent with Terror Management Theory, which posits that depression may stem from one's inability to sustain a sense of meaning in life after one's belief in the cultural worldview (i.e., a set of benign concepts for understanding the world and one's place in it) is undermined (Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1992).

Also consistent with our hypothesis, as well as with previous findings (e.g., Sellers & Shelton, 2003), was the finding that national attachment was negatively associated with evacuees' level of distress. Strong national attachment was specifically associated with lower levels of depression and stress. This finding is consistent with previous findings on the protective function of belongingness, or connectedness, against posttraumatic stress and depressive symptoms (e.g., Dekel & Tuval-Mashiach, 2012; Hagerty & Williams, 1999).

Our findings are further supported by the significant interaction found between national attachment and ideological commitment. Our findings specifically suggest that under low levels of national attachment, stronger ideological commitment is associated with higher depression levels. Also, under high levels of ideological commitment, weaker national attachment is associated with higher depression levels.

These findings are suggestive of a complex moderation pattern in which elevated levels of the resilience-related factor diminish the adverse effect of the putative vulnerability factor whereas high levels of the vulnerability-related factor bolster the positive effects of the resilience-related factor. Such an interactive pattern further demonstrates the complex dynamics of ideology as a variable that embeds vulnerability- and resilience-related elements. Our findings suggest that although national attachment, or a content-laden dimen-

sion of ideology, is protective against distress, ideological commitment, or the content-free dimension of ideology, is associated with higher levels of distress. These findings are consistent with numerous studies indicating that many psychosocial factors consist of different elements with different, and sometimes opposing, effects on mental health (for a review, see Shahar et al., 2012).

It is important to note that no significant associations were found between DASS-anxiety and either of the ideological variables assessed in this study. This lack of association may be suggestive of important differences between stress/depression and anxiety as assessed by the DASS. The nature of these differences should be the target of future research.

Limitations of this study include our reliance on a cross-sectional design, which does not rule out the possibility that levels of distress affected ideological factors, as well as our exclusive reliance on self-report measures and the relatively small sample size. The relatively low response rate may be attributed to the fact that Gush Katif evacuees became increasingly suspicious of academic scholars, which are seen by many evacuees as being politically left-leaning individuals that demonize settlers and their supporters (Feige, 2009; Gross, 2006). Although caution should be exercised with generalizing this study's findings because of the small sample size, power analyses (Cohen et al., 2003) indicated that our analyses were of adequate power, and the high estimates of effect sizes (Cohen, 1988) indicated that the strengths or magnitudes of the reported significant relationships are large.

It is important to note that in light of our relatively small sample, most of which was female and religious, controlling for sex and religiosity would be deemed untenable. Moreover, neither education nor year of residence correlated with either of the DASS subscales; hence, our models did not control for the shared variance associated with these variables.

Nevertheless, the unique demographic characteristics of this sample do require attention. The high percentage of married and religious participants in this sample may be attributed to the unique characteristics of the sample population used in this study, which is by definition a highly religious community with relatively low divorce rates. The relatively higher response rate of female participants as compared with male participants in this study may be attributed to sex differences in rumination and expressiveness. Women's greater tendency to engage in rumination and higher emotional expressivity (Nolen-Hoeksema & Jackson, 2001) might specifically account for their willingness to share their ideas and emotions with researchers 6 years after their traumatic evacuation. Future studies should attempt to illuminate the potential role of rumination mechanisms in women's willingness to cooperate in similar studies.

The fact that our sample was predominantly religious and female also raises the question whether our findings can be generalized to the larger population of settlers. Although consistent with previous findings regarding the associations between ideology and distress among female and male settlers, our findings may be more applicable to females. However, in terms of religiosity, this sample roughly reflects the demographic composition of the population of evacuees, most of which were religious. Future studies are encouraged to use larger samples, which would allow the examination of the possible effects of religiosity and sex on the association between ideological variables and distress.

As noted above, the population of settlers was relatively heterogeneous in terms of their initial motivations to settle Gush Katif. However, although some settlers were primarily motivated by financial and practical considerations, many have adopted an ideological view of the settlements over their time residing there. Because our sample mainly consisted of settlers who were residents of Gush Katif for over 10 years, and most were religious, it may adequately represent the ideological fabric of the “typical” settler population. Furthermore, our findings might also be generalized to other populations facing political relocation or resettlement. More specifically, past research has shown that place attachment and political ideology may play an important role in adjusting to forced relocation among refugees and immigrants in various sociopolitical contexts (Ben Sira, 1997; Boğaçç, 2009; Finklestein & Solomon, 2009).

Despite its limitations, our findings may have important theoretical and practical implications. First, this study contributes to vulnerability-resilience research by being the first to demonstrate the complex dynamics of the relationship between different aspects of ideology and mental health. By suggesting that ideology is a complex construct embedding elements of vulnerability and resilience, this study adds to the host of psychosocial variables that research have shown to have protective- and vulnerability-related dimensions, such as religiosity and social support (Shahar et al., 2012). Future research is encouraged to examine the effects of other content-laden dimensions of evacuees’ ideology on their well-being as well as their potential interactive effects with content-free dimensions of their ideology.

Second, the findings of the present study improve our understanding of the various factors affecting the emotional adjustment of evacuees’ to their forced relocation. Because political evacuees in Israel are a relatively small community who are reluctant to cooperate with academic research, studying such unique sample may advance our understanding of the effects of forced evacuation, particularly in times of war and conflict, on evacuees’ mental health. Although 6 years have gone by since their forced relocation, Gush Katif evacuees to this day suffer the consequences of this traumatic event. Many evacuees still live in temporary housing, and some are still unem-

ployed after failing to reestablish their businesses since the relocation (Lev-On, 2010). Furthermore, current Israeli political discourse still revolves around the possibility of future withdrawals from the territories, representing a constant reminder to their personal trauma and a continuous threat to their values and ideology. Thus, examining the relations between the evacuees' current levels of national attachment and ideological commitment, and their current level of distress in light of the political and personal conditions in which they live today, could shed more light on the long-term effects of the evacuation.

Finally, this study suggests that seeing ideology as a multidimensional, complex construct may allow for a more nuanced treatment of evacuated settlers. More specifically, as it identifies the significance of national attachment in protecting evacuees against distress, this study can be used to direct proactive intervention programs aimed at enhancing national attachment as an attribute of resilience.

In conclusion, this work provides initial evidence for the need for more rigorous work on the sociopolitical influences on traumatic stress processes. Specifically, future studies are encouraged to use larger and more demographically heterogeneous samples in which these associations can be further examined.

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