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Guilt Among Ex-Prisoners of War

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The article explores guilt and its correlates among Israeli ex-prisoners of war (ex-POWs) of the 1973 Yom Kippur War (YKW; N = 119) and a matched group of veterans of the same war who were not held captive (N = 97). Results revealed that compared with controls, ex-POWs reported both more posttraumatic stress symptoms (PTSS) and more guilt, after adjusting for PTSS. Results also revealed a significant PTSS × Group interaction effect on guilt, wherein the association between PTSS and guilt was stronger among ex-POWs than among controls. Among ex-POWs, results showed that feelings of helplessness when falling captive, inwardly directed active coping, and a sense of loss of control during captivity contributed to the prediction of guilt. Support at homecoming made no contributions to variance, and circumstances of falling into captivity did not predict guilt. Results support the notion that guilt is a significant component of the psychological aftermath of war captivity, and highlight its correlates. Clinical and theoretical implications of the findings are discussed.

KEYWORDS *coping, longitudinal data, posttraumatic stress symptoms, war captivity*

Although essentially victims, many trauma survivors feel guilt related to events they experienced (e.g., Kubany, 1994; Resick & Schnicke, 1993). Guilt consists of self-blame or a distressing sense of responsibility for events and behaviors (Kubany et al., 1996). Trauma-related guilt is a specific form of self-blame that coincides with a belief that one should have thought, felt, or behaved differently than he or she did when the trauma occurred (Kubany, 1994).

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Research on military populations to date has yielded inconsistent findings regarding guilt. Several U.S. studies of Vietnam veterans documented the salience of guilt (e.g., Glover, Pelesky, Bruno, & Sette, 1990). Similarly, in Israel, clinical case reports also pointed to a high occurrence of guilt among 1973 Yom Kippur War (YKW) combat veterans. However, a study of Israeli combat warriors of the First Lebanon War revealed limited reports of guilt, contrary to clinical impressions (Solomon, 1993). We set out to reconcile this disparity by systematically examining ex-prisoners of war (ex-POWs), a distinct group of veterans likely more prone to guilt given the massive and interpersonal nature of the trauma of captivity.

Captivity bears much potential for guilt, which is compounded on the guilt prompted by combat experiences leading up to the capture. Captivity entails a confinement within a prolonged interpersonal bond of coercion with the captors, and repeated exposure to physical and emotional torture. These experiences often carry long-lasting effects on the captive's personality and relationships (Herman, 1992). Each phase relating to the experience of captivity might give rise to feelings of guilt for certain behaviors or transgressions. Accounts of ex-POWs of different wars depict guilt as part of the psychological stress they face (e.g., Ursano, 1981). To our knowledge, however, there is a scarcity of empirical studies focused on guilt among this group. This study therefore seeks to examine guilt as a distinct and influential experience among ex-POWs. At the same time, due to the highly traumatizing nature of the experience of captivity, we also expect guilt to be involved in the posttraumatic symptomatology of ex-POWs.

GUILT AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF CAPTIVITY

The initial stage of capture includes complex and diverse circumstances, and could enfold adverse thoughts and emotions (e.g., the fear of having been captured due to improper actions, insufficient struggle against it, and a fear of death), potentially engendering guilt. The hostile and adverse circumstances of capture and the perception that falling captive could have been prevented or fought against all bear implications for experiences of guilt among POWs.

Throughout the duration of their captivity, POWs are subjected to brutal torture, extreme humiliation, poor hygienic conditions, sensory deprivation, hunger, and thirst, trying their ability to survive and maintain their humanity (e.g., Hunt et al., 2008). An individual's responses to such extreme traumas are in part affected by his or her coping strategies (Aldwin & Park, 2004). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) distinguished between problem-focused coping, aimed at decreasing the intensity of the source of stress, and emotion-focused coping, aimed at regulating emotional distress. Studies indicate that the former strategy is more beneficial and more functional for managing stress, especially among male combatants (Taylor et al., 2009). We expect emotion-focused

copied to predict a higher level of guilt as opposed to active, problem-focused coping. Given the very limited freedom to react outwardly during captivity, we include a category of active coping strategies that are, however, inwardly directed (i.e., thinking ahead and planning how to cope with interrogations).

We extend our examination of responses to the stresses of captivity to include emotional reactions. Early studies have documented acute emotional responses during captivity, such as loss of emotional control (e.g., Ford & Spaulding, 1973). These reactions reflect a collapse of the captive's defense mechanisms and could be perceived by the ex-POW, in retrospect, as a failure to manage, or hold one's own, during captivity. This impact might also be compounded by a sense of emasculation experienced by male POWs—the sharp shift from being an active combat soldier to an imprisoned passive POW could entail a threat to one's masculinity. Furthermore, it stands to reason that having to inhibit emotional reactions that a combat soldier is trained to express outwardly and aggressively, within such an adverse situation, can result in an internalization of difficult negative emotions. In all, such perceptions of mental defeat might elicit guilt, and we postulate that emotional responses during captivity, including feeling abandoned, shame, fear, rage, and loss of control, will predict more guilt.

After release from captivity and their return home, the POWs transition from a state of privation and detachment to one of intensive activity, including renewed contact with family and friends, and an expectation to return to precaptivity levels of functioning. These extreme shifts can be taxing, despite the much yearned-for freedom and homecoming (Hunter, 1993). Furthermore, ex-POWs of the YKW faced a mixed reception when returning to Israel following the war. On the one hand, they were portrayed as heroes by their families and friends, and by the media. At the same time, they were faced with criticism, especially from within the military, which at the time attached great value to the notion that death is preferable to falling captive and to surrendering information to the enemy (Gavriely, 2006). In many cases, adjustment difficulties following captivity are compounded by an accusatory attitude toward the victim, whether implicit or explicit. Moreover, once they returned home, ex-POWs were isolated and interrogated about their time in captivity and about the extent of the information that they had given away. Accounts of some ex-POWs describe these interrogations as no less traumatic than those during captivity, as they implied blame toward them from the Israeli authorities (Neria, 2001). We therefore expect that such negative experiences at homecoming will contribute to feelings of guilt.

Israeli ex-POWs were nevertheless received warmly by their families and the media. Although nonjudgmental, this euphoric welcome and their portrayal as heroes might have also contributed to their sense of guilt, due to the disparity between their inner experiences regarding their behaviors and the reaction of those around them. Such a positive approach that absolves the victims of any wrongdoing might represent a refusal to attend to the painful

moral complications that characterize the extreme state of captivity (Herman, 1992).

In light of the preceding review, we predict that ex-POWs of the YKW will report higher levels of guilt, compared with control veterans of the same war who did not fall captive. We expect that some of the differences between ex-POWs and the controls in levels of guilt will stem from unique characteristics of the experience of captivity (e.g., the physical and emotional torture, and the ambivalent emotional bonds with the captors). At the same time, we also expect that some group differences in guilt will be related to the differences between ex-POWs and comparable veterans in their levels of posttraumatic stress symptoms (PTSS), as the latter is an inherent outcome of traumatic experiences. We therefore expect to find higher levels of guilt among ex-POWs compared with controls even after accounting for PTSS. As ex-POWs could not outwardly express their distress when in captivity, this resulted in an internalization of distressful emotions involving much guilt. Because the posttraumatic clinical picture among ex-POWS is in large part related to guilt, we expect the associations between PTSS and guilt to be stronger among ex-POWs as compared with controls.

THIS STUDY

This study seeks to explore guilt among Israeli ex-POWs and comparable veterans who were not taken captive (controls). It is hypothesized that (a) ex-POWs will present higher levels of PTSS and guilt than controls, and that the difference in levels of guilt will be maintained after controlling for levels of PTSS; (b) that there will be a moderation effect between PTSS and study group on levels of guilt, such that among ex-POWs, the association between guilt and PTSS will be stronger than that found among control veterans; and (c) that the experiences surrounding the capture, coping strategies, emotional reactions and thoughts during captivity, and experiences at homecoming will predict levels of reported guilt among ex-POWs.

METHOD

Participants

Two groups of male Israeli veterans of the 1973 YKW were contacted and interviewed: (a) ex-POWs, and (b) a control group of former Israeli combat soldiers who fought in the same war, on the same fronts, but were never held captive. Ex-POWs had either been held captive in Egypt (6 weeks) or Syria (8 months). Within the ex-POW group, analyses were carried out to assess associations between length of imprisonment with background variables and test measures. There were no significant links between captivity duration and

any of the measures (see: Solomon et al., 2014). In this longitudinal, prospective design, both groups were assessed twice: Time 1 in 1991, and Time 2 in 2003. Of the 158 ex-POWs in the Time 1 phase, 120 completed the Time 2 phase (attrition rate of 24%). Of the 163 control group participants in the Time 1 phase, 106 completed Time 2 (attrition rate of 35%). Several participants had only partially completed the studies' questionnaires and had to be excluded from the analyses. Thus, our sample finally included 119 ex-POWs, and 99 control veterans. Control veterans were selected on the basis of their similarity to the ex-POWs on relevant military and personal variables such as age, combat exposure, and rank. The two groups did not differ on age ($M = 66.37$ vs. $M = 66.47$), length of marriage ($M = 28.48$ vs. $M = 26.44$), divorce rate (5.5% vs. 5.0%), or number of children ($M = 3.27$ vs. $M = 3.24$). See Table 1 for sociodemographic characteristics.

All of the participants were interviewed at a central hospital or at their homes. We compared the two samples on a series of sociodemographic and military variables and found no differences between those assessed in the hospital and those examined in their homes. Before they filled out the questionnaires, participants signed informed consent forms and we assured them that the data would remain confidential and would in no way affect their status in military or civilian life. The ethics committees of both the Israel Defense Forces and Tel Aviv University approved the study.

Measures

PTSS were assessed by a 17-item PTSD Inventory. Analyses were based on the PTSS measure at Time 2 of the study, in 2003, which matches criteria endorsed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th ed., text rev. [DSM-IV-TR]; American Psychiatric Association, 2010). Each item describes a posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptom adapted for war trauma. The total score for the scale was computed based on the summed frequency of the symptoms. We also defined whether participants met DSM-IV-TR PTSD symptom criteria or not as the presence of at least one intrusion, one avoidance, and two hyperarousal symptoms. We also included the F diagnosis criterion of distress and dysfunction in this definition. Internal consistency among the 17 items was high (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$), and the scale was found to have high convergent validity when compared with diagnoses based on structured clinical interviews (Solomon et al., 1993).

Guilt was assessed at Time 2 via the Trauma-Related Guilt Inventory (TRGI; Kubany et al., 1996), a 32-item questionnaire made up of three scales: distress, global guilt, and guilt cognitions that specifically refer to guilt regarding the traumatic event of captivity (for the ex-POW group) or YKW (for the control group). The cognitive scale consists of three cognitive subscales: hindsight-bias/responsibility (belief of bearing responsibility for an event),

TABLE 1 Demographic Characteristics by Study Group (in 2003)

		Ex-prisoners of war	Control group
	<i>N</i>	119	99
	%	54.6%	45.4%
Age (49–80)	<i>M</i>	54.07	54.07
	<i>SD</i>	5.18	5.18
Country of origin			
Israel		72	81
		60.5%	82.7%
Asia/Africa		31	8
		26.1%	8.1%
Europe/America		16	9
		13.4%	9.2%
Years of education (4–25)	<i>M</i>	13.92	14.09
	<i>SD</i>	3.69	3.08
Family status			
Married		108	96
		90.8%	97.0%
Not married		11	3
		9.2%	3.0%
Single		1	0
Divorced		9	2
Widower		1	1
Religiousness			
Secular		77	58
		64.7%	58.6%
Traditional		31	26
		26.1%	26.3%
Religious		11	15
		9.2%	15.2%
Employment in last year			
None		32	9
		28.1%	9.2%
Part-time		12	7
		10.5%	7.1%
Full-time		70	82
		61.4%	83.7%
Income (1 = Low, 5 = High)	<i>M</i>	3.46	3.68
	<i>SD</i>	1.11	1.17

wrongdoing (a violation of personal standards), and lack of justification (difficulty justifying behavior during an event). We also computed a total guilt score, which was the sum score of all items. Internal consistency was high for all scales: Cronbach's alpha for the total scale was .87, .91 for global guilt, .81 for guilt cognitions, and .91 for distress. Internal consistency for the cognitive subscales was somewhat lower, but also satisfactory ($\alpha = .78$ for hindsight bias, .74 for wrongdoing, and .71 for lack of justification). In this study, for reasons of parsimony, we mostly relied on the total guilt score for hypothesis testing, as it comprises all of the TRGI subscales and therefore represents all of the theoretical components of the questionnaire. The total

guilt score revealed high associations with all subscales of the TRGI (Pearson's correlations ranged between .86 and .65, $ps < .001$) except for its correlation with the lack of justification cognitive subscale which was slightly lower ($r = .30, p < .001$).

The ex-POWs were asked to respond to a series of structured questions regarding aspects of their captivity using a questionnaire that had been especially designed for this study. The first set of questions pertained to the circumstances on falling captive. Ex-POWs were asked whether or not they perceived falling captive as something that could have been prevented. They were also asked about whether they fell captive while actively engaged in combat or whether their post was taken over, and whether or not they were actively involved in the decision to fall captive. We also assessed the POWs' experiences, thoughts, and feelings when they were captured. A factor analysis of the questionnaire with Varimax rotation yielded four main factors that explained 73% of the variance: death wish, helplessness, optimism and hope, and dissociation (for further details see Neria, Solomon, & Dekel, 1998). We further assessed emotional responses in prison and a factor analysis with Varimax rotation of this measure revealed three main factors that explained 45% of the variance: feelings of abandonment, negative feelings toward captors, and feelings of loss of control. Additionally, we inquired about coping behaviors in prison. A factor analysis with Varimax rotation yielded three main factors, explaining 51% of the variance: inwardly directed active coping, dissociative coping, and outwardly directed coping. The last set of 14 items inquired about the social responses at homecoming, covering a wide range of positive and negative responses. A factor analysis of this measure with Varimax rotation revealed four main factors that explained 61% of the variance: positive reactions, feelings of anger and shame, loss of place and status, and loneliness and isolation.

RESULTS

Group Differences in Guilt and Posttraumatic Symptoms

We assessed differences between the two research groups on PTSS. First, we examined differences between the groups at Time 1 and at Time 2. Analyses of variance with group (ex-POWs vs. controls) as independent variable and PTSS as the dependent variable revealed that at Time 1, ex-POWs reported higher levels of PTSS compared with controls, $F(1, 216) = 5.25, p = .022$. At Time 2, the differences became more pronounced, as ex-POWs again reported higher PTSS compared with veterans who did not fall captive, $F(1, 216) = 176.93, p < .001$. We also examined group differences in clinical indications for the presence of PTSD. At Time 1, 14 participants of the ex-POW group (8.7%) met criteria for PTSD, compared with five controls (3.0%). These differences were significant, $\chi^2(1) = 4.77, p = .04$. At Time 2,

TABLE 2 Means, Standard Differences, F and η^2 Values of Guilt by Group, Controlling for Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms

Prisoners of war ^a		Control group ^b		$F(1, 215)$ (η^2)	Variable
M	SD	M	SD		
0.62	0.95	0.11	0.26	6.28* (.01)	Global guilt
2.25	1.14	0.77	0.74	41.94*** (.17)	Distress
0.85	0.59	0.65	0.51	1.63 (.00)	Guilt cognitions
					Cognition subscales:
0.74	0.77	0.59	0.71	0.40 (.00)	(a) Hindsight-bias/responsibility
1.01	0.88	0.46	0.66	7.22** (.03)	(b) Wrongdoing
1.29	0.94	1.33	1.15	0.03 (.00)	(c) Lack of justification
1.09	0.57	0.60	0.39	14.23*** (.06)	Total guilt score

^a $N = 119$. ^b $N = 97$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

35 of the ex-POWs (29.7%) met criteria for PTSD, compared with 2 participants of the control group (1.9%), $\chi^2(1) = 31$, $p < .001$. These findings indicate that as hypothesized, ex-POWs reported significantly higher levels of PTSS, and had a higher prevalence of reaching clinical levels of PTSD, compared with veterans of the control group. These differences persisted and even grew larger over time. Next, to assess differences between the two research groups on the various measures of guilt, multivariate analyses of covariance were conducted. PTSS was added as a covariate to the analysis. The independent variable was again research group, and the dependent variables were the guilt subscales. Means, standard differences, F values, and η^2 values are presented in Table 2.

The analysis reveals that after accounting for levels of PTSS, ex-POWs scored significantly higher on the total guilt score, the global guilt score, and the distress score. There were no significant differences between the groups on the guilt cognitions score. Of the guilt cognitions subscales, the analyses revealed a significant difference between the groups only on the wrongdoing subscale. These findings reveal that, as hypothesized, beyond levels of PTSS, ex-POWs report higher levels of guilt compared with non-POW controls on most guilt scales, except for the guilt cognitions scale and two of its subscales.

The Relationship Between Guilt and War Captivity

We then examined Pearson's correlations between guilt and sociodemographic variables, and with variables related to captivity (see Table 3). This analysis was conducted only among the ex-POW participants, as it was based on measures relating to war captivity experiences. A significant negative correlation was found between income and total guilt score, and with distress score. Education negatively correlated with distress and positively with the

TABLE 3 Pearson's Correlations Between Guilt, Sociodemographic, and Captivity Variables Among Ex-Prisoners of War

Measures	Guilt scales			Guilt cognition subscales			
	Global guilt	Distress	Guilt cognitions	Total guilt score	Hindsight bias/responsibility	Wrongdoing	Lack of justification
Sociodemographic variables							
Age	-.04	-.10	-.17	-.16	-.15	-.07	-.13
Education	.10	-.26*	.09	-.01	.25*	.08	-.23
Religiosity	-.03	-.17	-.14	-.15	-.19	-.08	.09
Income	-.10	-.45**	-.22	-.33**	-.11	-.19	-.09
Circumstances and feelings upon being captured							
Level of activeness when falling captive	.12	-.10	.09	.06	.11	.12	-.02
Level of involvement in the decision	.13	.12	.08	.11	.15	.02	-.12
Capture was preventable	-.02	.12	-.00	.03	.07	.02	-.16
Death wishes	-.13	.20	-.10	-.03	-.03	-.09	-.14
Helplessness	-.05	-.09	-.13	-.14	-.19	-.07	.07
Optimism and hope	.05	.20	.16	.20	.23	.22	-.20
Dissociation	.32**	.22	.11	.22	.15	.05	.01
Coping and experiences during captivity							
Inwardly directed active coping	-.27*	-.12	-.24	-.26*	.01	-.11	-.39**
Dissociative coping	.06	.14	.23	.21	.16	.14	-.01
Outwardly directed coping and future planning	.03	.05	.07	.08	.10	.03	-.04
Feelings of abandonment	-.11	.08	.04	.03	-.02	-.01	-.03
Negative feelings toward captors	.13	.10	.25*	.24	.25*	.33**	-.11
Feelings of loss of control	.17	.37**	.32**	.39**	.21	.32**	.03
Support at homecoming							
Positive reactions	.14	-.20	-.00	-.06	.08	-.08	-.12
Anger and shame	-.03	.10	.07	.07	-.05	.20	-.01
Loss of place and status	-.09	.20	.35**	.29*	.05	.36**	.16
Loneliness and isolation	.01	.03	.22	.16	.09	.07	.31*

Note: Listwise $N = 96$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

hindsight-bias and responsibility subscale. Age and religiosity did not correlate with guilt. Analysis of the circumstances and thoughts and feelings when being captured only yielded a positive significant correlation between dissociation from the event with global guilt. Of the measures describing the captivity experience, there were negative significant correlations between inwardly directed active coping with total guilt score, global guilt, and lack of justification. Feelings toward captors were significantly positively correlated with the cognitive scale and the hindsight-bias and responsibility and the wrongdoing subscales. Feelings of loss of control were also positively correlated with wrongdoing, with distress, and with total guilt score.

The distribution of the answers on questions regarding reception at homecoming pointed to very low variance in the different items, as most ex-POWs described feeling positive reactions toward them after repatriation. There was, however, a significant positive correlation between loss of place and status with the total guilt score, the cognitive scale, and the wrongdoing subscale. Feelings of loneliness and isolation were positively correlated with the lack of justification cognitive subscale.

Association Between Guilt and PTSS

To explore the association between guilt and PTSS and the moderation effect of group (whether the association is stronger among ex-POWs compared with veterans of the control group), we conducted a multiple hierarchical regression analysis with total guilt score as the dependent variable. All continuous independent variables were mean centered prior to analysis. Age at Time 2 (2003) was entered in the first step. PTSS and study group (ex-POWs vs. controls) were entered in Step 2. The interaction figure PTSS \times Group was entered in the third and final step. The interaction effect was probed using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2012). Table 4 presents the beta coefficients

TABLE 4 Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Total Guilt Score by Posttraumatic Symptoms, Study Group, and Their Interaction

Predicting variables	Step 1	Step 2 + PTSS, Group	Step 3 + PTSS \times Group
	β	β	β
Age	-.05	.01	-.05
Posttraumatic symptoms		.60***	.36**
Group		.05	-.08
Posttraumatic Symptoms \times Group			.36*
R^2	.00	.41***	.42***
ΔR^2		.41***	.01*

Note: Listwise $N = 69$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

for the dependent measure, percentage of explained variance, and the addition to the explained variance in each step.

The independent variables in the regression model explained 42% of the variance, $F(4, 212) = 38.65, p < .001$. In Step 1, age did not contribute to the explained variance. Adding PTSS and group in Step 2 added 41% to the explained variance ($p < .001$). As hypothesized, PTSS were associated with higher levels of guilt. Contrary to our hypothesis, group was not significantly associated with guilt when entered in the same regression model as PTSS. In Step 3, where the PTSS \times Group interaction was entered, there was a small but significant increase to the explained variance. The interaction was associated with levels of guilt, as predicted. Probing the interaction effect revealed the expected pattern: Levels of guilt were highest among ex-POWs with high levels of PTSS ($B = .07, p < .001$), whereas among veterans of the control group, the association between PTSS with guilt was more moderate ($B = .04, p < .001$). This is in line with our hypothesis that study group moderated the association between PTSS and guilt.

Associations of Guilt with Aspects of Captivity Experiences

To explore the unique contribution of characteristics of captivity, in their chronological order, to the variance in guilt, we conducted multiple hierarchical regression analyses for the different guilt measures. These analyses were also conducted only among the ex-POW group. Age was entered in the first step. In Step 2, measures describing experiences, thoughts, and feelings on being captured were entered (e.g., level of involvement in decision to fall prisoner). Variables describing coping and experiences during captivity (e.g., outwardly directed coping) were entered in the third step. In the fourth step, we entered variables describing support at homecoming (e.g., positive reactions). The regression model yielded significant results for predicting the total guilt score, cognitive scale, and the wrongdoing subscale. We only report results pertaining to the total guilt score, as the pattern of results was similar for the different scales. Table 5 presents beta coefficients for total guilt score, percentage of explained variance, and the addition to the explained variance in each step.

The regression model for predicting total guilt score was significant, and the independent variables together explained 43% of the variance, $F(18, 50) = 2.08, p < .05$. Age made a nonsignificant contribution to the explained variance. The addition of measures describing experiences, thoughts, and feelings on being captured in Step 2 did not significantly increase the explained variance in guilt, contrary to our hypothesis. Step 3, which introduced variables regarding coping and feelings during captivity, carried a significant contribution to the explained variance. Inwardly directed active coping predicted lower levels of guilt, as expected, and sense of loss of

TABLE 5 Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Total Guilt Score by Captivity Variables, Among Ex-Prisoners of War

Predicting variables		Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
		β	β	β	β
Step 1	Age	-.16	-.10	-.16	-.15
Step 2 Circumstances and feelings upon being captured	Activeness when falling captive		.07	.17	.18
	Involvement in the decision		.14	.06	.06
	Capture was preventable		-.05	-.08	-.12
	Death wishes		-.11	-.21	-.19
	Helplessness		-.20	-.27*	-.25*
	Optimism and hope		.14	.14	.13
Step 3 Coping and experiences during captivity	Dissociation		.24	.13	.22
	Active coping inwardly directed			-.32**	-.26*
	Dissociative coping			.13	.22
	Outwardly directed coping			.06	.04
	Feelings of abandonment			.06	.02
	Negative feelings toward captors			.21	.17
Step 4 Support at homecoming	Feelings of loss of control			.30*	.30*
	Positive reactions				-.01
	Anger and shame				-.16
	Loss of place and status				.19
	Loneliness and isolation				.08
	R^2		.02	.14	.39**
ΔR^2			.12	.25**	.03

Note: Listwise $N = 69$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

control was associated with higher levels of guilt, as expected. The addition of this step to the model increased the beta coefficient for helplessness when falling captive, entered in Step 2, so that contrary to our hypothesized association, it predicted lower levels of guilt. The fourth step, where variables describing reception at homecoming were added, did not make any significant contribution to the model. Thus, contrary to our prediction, these variables were not associated with guilt.

DISCUSSION

This research aimed to explore guilt among ex-POWs. We found that ex-POWs reported higher levels of PTSS, and that even after accounting for PTSS, they reported higher levels of guilt than a comparable group of combat veterans who were not taken captive. Furthermore, we found a moderation effect, wherein PTSS were more strongly associated with higher levels of guilt among ex-POWs, compared with non-POW veterans. These results provide further support to the assertion that the effects of the massive trauma of

captivity are not limited to PTSS, but entail wider psychological sequelae (e.g., Solomon & Ohry, 2010), including guilt.

In line with previous research, PTSS and guilt were significantly correlated among both our study groups, which is similar to previous findings among civilians (see Clements & Sawhney, 2000) and among combat veterans (Kubany & Manke, 1995). This finding is also consistent with previous studies that found that guilt predicted a higher severity of PTSD among combat veterans (i.e., Owens, Steger, Whitesell, & Herrera, 2009). Studies that examined guilt regarding acts of abuse during war suggest that a sense of guilt mediates between exposure to trauma and psychiatric symptomatology (Marx et al., 2010). These findings lend support to the recent diagnostic changes regarding PTSD in the *DSM-V* (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), which has been revised to include feelings such as guilt under the criterion of negative alterations in cognitions and mood. The current finding, that PTSS explains most of the differences between our study groups in guilt levels, indicates that the high levels of guilt reported among ex-POWs are indeed anchored in PTSS. However, our findings also point to differential patterns of association between PTSS and guilt among ex-POWs and non-POW veterans. This study, therefore, suggests that to some degree, ex-POWs experience guilt that stems from the unique attributes of the captivity experience. Although it is difficult to parse posttraumatic guilt from PTSS following war and captivity, we accounted for variance stemming from PTSS in our analyses, which should to some extent shed light on the distinct associations between captivity and feelings of guilt that are not explained by PTSS.

The findings that ex-POWs endorse higher posttraumatic symptomatology are consistent with previous findings (e.g., Solomon & Dekel, 2005), yet the findings that ex-POWs also endorse more guilt are relatively novel, as this topic has not been systematically studied to date. Captivity is compounded on the trauma of combat, and is distinct from it as a trauma deliberately inflicted by other humans. Clinicians maintain that victims of repeated man-inflicted trauma develop a specific form of complex PTSD that chafes at personality constructs, carrying vast and deleterious effects in the interpersonal sphere (Herman, 1992). In the same vein, we maintain that the unique characteristics of captivity greatly intensify guilt. The extreme stress, suffering, and loss of freedom and of one's previous identity during captivity (Lieblich, 1994) might have brought about behavioral and emotional reactions that conflicted with accepted social norms at the time of the YKW (i.e., standing up to the enemy at all costs). These reactions might be difficult for ex-POWs to reconcile with and integrate into their life story without regret and self-blame. Our present findings regarding the significantly high levels of guilt and PTSS, more than 30 years after captivity, further distinguish the unique and long-term distress of ex-POWs.

Our second aim was to explore correlates of guilt among ex-POWs. In a correlational analysis, sociodemographic variables were weakly correlated with guilt. Income was associated with lower levels of guilt, which parallels with previous findings of negative correlations between socioeconomic status and PTSD (Dohrenwend et al., 2008). Education was also a significant correlate, but contrary to our hypothesis, it was associated with higher levels of guilt cognitions. Perhaps ex-POWs with more years of education tended toward harsh patterns of cognitive processing regarding their reactions and behaviors during captivity, resulting in more guilt-related cognitions. This might involve more moral stringency, and perhaps a heightened internalization of societal norms at the time of YKW, that equalled falling captive with a shameful defeat, thus bringing about greater guilt.

We also examined the contribution of different aspects of captivity, in chronological order, to guilt. Of the variables describing circumstances and feelings when captured, some made no significant contribution to the explained variance in guilt, and some were moderate predictors. Contrary to the direction of our hypothesis, we found that feelings of helplessness when falling captive predicted lower levels of guilt. Dekel, Mandl, and Solomon (2011) suggested that the emotional response of loss of control might be linked to the notion of “mental defeat” (Ehlers, Maercker, & Boos, 2000), which involves the experience of a drastic loss of autonomy and identity. It could be that the emotional resign involved in helplessness paradoxically helped prevent an overwhelming sense of guilt. Perhaps the emotional experience of loss of control fosters the standpoint that one could have done nothing more in a given situation of falling into the hands of one’s captors, thus absolving the individual of further blame for any faults regarding their reactions. Such reactions might function as a compromise that allows for less guilt when one faces events without an integrative, independent sense of self that can account for the consequences of certain actions or conflictual emotions. Guilt is usually conceived as a motivator that, following a transgression, brings about an attempt to repair damaging consequences (Sheikh & Janoff-Bulman, 2010). The ability to repair consequences of wrongdoing is embedded in the extent to which a behavior is appraised as controllable (Janoff-Bulman, 2011). It could be that following a situation perceived as highly restricted in its inherent possibilities for diverse responses, no behavior can be repaired, thus involving less guilt.

The overall lack of substantial findings regarding the predictors in the initial steps of this model, described thus far, might stem from the fact that ex-POWs did not experience significant guilt about having fallen captive, as they perceived it as unavoidable. Perhaps, due to the harsh circumstances on the battlefield, falling captive was not perceived as something that could have been avoided, and did not conflict with basic beliefs. Perhaps ex-POWs felt that the responsibility for having fallen in captivity rests on the political and military echelons, and thus, those who should suffer the burden of guilt for

that event are the generals and the government, and not the soldiers themselves. This would be congruous with the general atmosphere in Israel following YKW, which created a deep chasm in the public's trust toward Israeli leadership. It seems, then, that guilt is more related to events involving free will and choice.

Following this reasoning, conditions during captivity are more likely to involve guilt, as the difficulties endured while incarcerated by the enemy challenge the moral standards of the POW. Yet there is no possibility to express anger or hostility toward the perpetrators. Whereas combatants are allowed, and even encouraged, to manifest aggression on the battlefield, any expression of overt anger on the part of the POW might entail life-threatening results (Solomon, 1993). Lifton (1979) maintained that one of the sources of trauma-related guilt is the inability to express aggression and therefore having to internalize it. In accord with this line of thought, in this study coping strategies and emotions during captivity carried a significant (yet moderate) contribution to guilt. These findings are consistent with findings from previous waves of this research, which is a part of a large-scale, longitudinal study. Findings based on the previous wave point to the predominant contribution of reactions during time of captivity, to mental health following release from it (Neria et al., 2000). Coping strategies and responses to stressors are linked with subsequent adjustment outcomes (i.e., Holahan & Moos, 1987), as they embody a central aspect of one's adaptation in the face of adversity. It is likely that during captivity, POWs' trauma-related emotions and their perception of their actions lead to an eventual increase in guilt emotions and cognitions. This conceptualization corresponds with the definition of trauma-related guilt as an unpleasant feeling that comes with the belief that one should have thought, felt, or behaved differently (Kubany et al., 1996).

During incarceration, the captives experience torment exacted on them with the direct aim of breaking their spirit, by captors on whom they depend for their physical survival (Solomon & Ohry, 2010). It is important to consider this interpersonal component when distinguishing the trauma of captivity from that of wartime combat, as it could involve difficult emotions and behaviors (e.g., conveying information to the interrogators) that arise from a violent, torturous, and humiliating interaction. During captivity, there is no possibility for a fight-or-flight response, and the prisoner "reverts to the child who relies on others to control his life" (Russell, 1984, p. 252), which could involve primal, or even primitive emotional reactions to a complete loss of control over one's life. There could be a disturbing ambivalence of emotions toward the captors who threaten the POW's life on the one hand but also deliver sustenance (i.e., food and water) and at times might even be an unlikely source of support (as embodied in random acts of compassion). In the long term, one's overwhelming reactions to these circumstances could erode the ex-POW's sense of integrity, or sense of worth, contributing to feelings of guilt regarding their emotional responses during that time. As

trauma survivors are likely to experience guilt regarding many facets of the traumatic event (Kubany & Manke, 1995), ex-POWs seem prone to feeling guilt regarding negative emotions invoked by their captors. Thus, the shame and guilt instilled by the captors is evident, even more than 30 years after release from captivity.

We did not find the predicted association between homecoming and levels of guilt. This contradicts findings based on previous waves of this data set, that combat veterans who were received negatively on their return home reported more psychiatric symptoms (Neria et al., 1998). The lack of findings regarding reception at homecoming in this study could be due to the limited variance in its measures. Most respondents reported receiving a positive welcome, and almost all of them felt support and nonjudgmental acceptance, generally from their families and their immediate social circle.

This research underscores the long-term sequelae of captivity as an experience that confronts ex-POWs with a near complete breakdown of moral standards, which can entail much guilt. These results should be interpreted with caution for several reasons. The first reason is our sample size and the attrition between measurements (Twitchell, Hertzog, Klein, & Schuckit, 1992), which is inevitable, particularly when following up traumatized populations (Niles, Newman, & Fisher, 2000). Second, we only examined respondents who took part in both waves of measurements, a strategy that limits the number of participants. At the same time, however, the response rates in our sample were relatively higher compared to similar longitudinal research on U. S. veterans (e.g., Orcutt, Erickson, & Wolfe, 2004). Third, caution is necessary when generalizing from these results, as the respondents who dropped out of our study could be distinctive in their levels of guilt from those who took part in both of the waves examined. As we only measured guilt at Time 2, we are not able to examine differences between the Time 1 and Time 2 groups. Fourth, because we carried out a prospective study that validates relationships between measures over time, the measures of guilt and PTSS, which were examined here, were collected 30 years after the trauma of captivity. The data were based on a retrospective self-report of the participants, and we cannot disregard possible confounding factors in the lives of the participants that might have evolved over time and influenced their guilt and trauma-related reports. In addition, levels of guilt might have changed over time. Had the measurement taken place sooner, we could have accounted for the different trajectories of change and persistence of this variable over time.

To summarize, guilt appears to further our understanding of the psychological hardship and PTSS that result from war captivity. Further research should examine the links between guilt and PTSS in other interpersonal traumas, to better understand and conceptualize the long-term responses to traumatic events. Furthermore, as aging processes amplify the effects of trauma (Solomon & Ginzburg, 1998), and because guilt plays an important role in the clinical posttraumatic picture that is presented by survivors of the trauma of captivity, it

might be especially beneficial to attend to feelings of guilt among trauma survivors in the second half of life, such as the participants in this sample. A better understanding of the ties between trauma and guilt could advance the treatment and assistance given to ex-POWs and survivors of other kinds of interpersonal trauma, so that coping with guilt-related feelings and cognitions could in turn alleviate their distress and improve their mental health.

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