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RESILIENCE BY IRANIAN TORTURE SURVIVORS

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ABSTRACT

SEQUELAE OF POLITICAL TORTURE: NARRATIVES OF TRAUMA AND RESILIENCE BY IRANIAN TORTURE SURVIVORS

More than 100 countries around the world use systematic torture against civilians and members of political opposition groups. Iran has been identified as one of seven countries with the most "appalling human rights records" (Amnesty International, 2001). In addition to continual use of public floggings and stoning of civilians for punishment of crimes, between 1981 to 1988, the government of Iran executed thousands of political prisoners, almost all youngsters, and killed many others under torture to obtain confessions (Abrahamian, 1999). This qualitative investigation presents a narrative approach to the study of trauma and resilience. It addresses the question of how a group of former political prisoners from Iran, have made sense of their torture experience and their survival, and how they define their proactive work for the protection of human rights. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with activist torture survivors from Iran, who currently live in Germany. They were interviewed about their experiences and explanations of their overcoming adversity given the Iranian historical, sociopolitical and cultural context. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, and narrative analysis was used to describe the emerging themes of trauma and resilience. This study's social and clinical implications lie in its utility to give voice to an invisible group, who has hands-on knowledge of surviving political violence. Findings contribute on the level of theory, calling for an integrative approach, addressing both individual and collective aspects of

trauma and resilience. Findings also call attention to the inclusion of concepts of political

psychology and social trauma when working with victims of political oppression.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Although countless international declarations have barred the violation of human rights, more than 100 countries around the world use torture systematically (Basoglu, 1992; Dross, 1999) against civilians and members of political opposition groups. Iran presents an example of one such country. The Islamic Republic of Iran has signed the 1984 United Nations (UN) Convention Against Torture; nonetheless, it has made widespread use of systematic brutalities both in the form of public floggings and in the secret physical and psychological torment of political prisoners (Amnesty International, 1999; Millett, 1994).

Abrahamian (1999) illustrates reports from Amnesty International (AI), the UN, and the Human Rights Watch (HRW), which suggest that between 1987 to 1994, "in a world in which prison brutality was rampant, Iran outdid most other countries in its use of systematic physical torture." Between June 1981 to July 1988, 7,943 political prisoners, almost all youngsters, were executed while many others were tortured to death in Iran's prisons (Abrahamian, 1999, p. 129). Those who have survived political imprisonment in Iran have often been released after a long and mortifying self-denunciation on public television. "Tortured or otherwise intimidated" (Millett, 1994), they have been coerced to repudiate their principles, convictions, and associates, after having signed statements of loyalty to the Islamic Republic.

This qualitative investigation is an attempt at exploring, through in-depth semi-structured interviews, the meaning of experiences of torture, survival, and proactive fight for human rights as constructed by former political prisoners from Iran presently living as refugees in Germany. The focus of the dissertation was on the stories of the participants' lives as related to the torture experience and its sequelae. The study explored what expressions of language and symbolism they use to talk about their trauma, how they make sense of their survival after suffering atrocities at the hands of authorities that have claimed the lives of many others, and what their outlook is for the future.

The literature of the following disciplines were examined for their contribution to understanding factors influencing the experiences of the Iranian survivors of political torture now active in the human right's scene: (a) history of modern Iran, (b) research on trauma, (c) research on resilience, (d) political sociology, and (e) multicultural psychology.

Definition of Torture

The focus of the present study is politically motivated torture. The following definitions are provided to give the reader a basic understanding of the context within which the traumatic experiences of survivors of political torture from Iran may arise. It is however the intention of this researcher to extract and portray the meaning of torture and its sequelae as experienced, interpreted, and emerged in the stories told by the participants in this study.

A number of researchers have suggested that defining torture is a complex task (Klayman, 1978; Suedfeld, 1990). Basoglu (1992) states that since there are many contexts in which humans inflict physical and psychological suffering on other humans, it

is difficult to create a clear-cut definition of torture. For example, Dross (1999) indicates that in the United States, torture occurs in cyclical patterns of family violence and ritual satanic cult practices; similarly, torture under these conditions may occur in other countries as an inherent part of the world of illegal drug trafficking.

The World Medical Association in its 1975 Tokyo declaration defined torture as "Deliberate, systematic or wanton infliction of physical or mental suffering by one or more persons acting alone or on the orders of any authority, to force another person to yield information, to make a confession, or for any other reason." The United Nations General Assembly (1984) has based the core of its definition of torture on the point that it is an intentional infliction, by agents of the state, of severe physical or mental pain or suffering.

While agreeing to these definitions of torture, Chester (1990) asserts that these legal definitions do not nearly communicate the magnitude and the intensity of the suffering and the devastation of victims of torture. She states, "The transformation of the victim's world occurs at all levels and involves all relationships." Stover and Nightingale (1985, as cited in Suedfeld, 1990) hold that while the infliction of pain is the central point of torture, its purpose is to ultimately destroy the humanity of its victim.

Significance of the Study

Joint Resolution Against Torture

The joint resolution against torture as reached by the American Psychological Association and American Psychiatric Association was approved by the Council of Representatives of the American Psychological Association on February 1, 1986, and the Board of Trustees of the American Psychiatric Association on December 6-7, 1985. This

decree is a recognition of the crucial role of mental health clinicians, and a reminder of their ethical and professional obligation and duty to contribute to the fight for protection of human rights worldwide, through research, development of treatment interventions and programs, and advocacy (American Psychological Association, 1984). It is presented here as the first proclamation attesting to the significance of the present study.

The resolution denotes that "American Psychologists are bound by their Ethical Principles to 'respect dignity and worth of the individual and strive for the prevention of fundamental human rights." It further acknowledges that state-sponsored torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment have been documented in many nations around the world, and that "psychological knowledge and techniques may be used to design and carry out torture." In addition, it states that "torture victims may suffer from long-term, multiple psychological and physical problems." Having made this recognition, the resolution "condemns torture wherever it occurs" and supports the "UN Declaration and Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the UN Principles of Medical Ethics" (American Psychological Association, 1984).

Prevalence of Torture

"Torture is not a problem confined to a remote dictatorship or a totalitarian regime, but one that concerns the very moral fabric of the democratic societies in which we live" (Basoglu, 1992). Torture of civilians has been documented in a number of publications. According to Basoglu (1992), the Interior Minister of Austria had reported that between 1984 to 1989, 2,622 allegations of ill treatment (e.g., pushing sharp objects

under the fingernail and burning with a cigarette) by the police were received. Of these allegations, 1,142 had resulted in criminal complaints and 33 had ended in conviction. In the United States, the infamous cases of civil rights violation against Abner Luima and Rodney King, who had both been brutally beaten while in the custody of the police are still fresh in the memory of the public.

No country is in the position to proclaim exemption from human rights violations; however, use of systematic torture has been documented to be more common in developing countries faced with political, ethnic, and religious discord (Basoglu, 1992). Political unrest and ethnic struggles that lead to atrocities committed by numerous governments against their citizens have resulted in an international migration that is signified by refugee movement. This subgroup of immigrants is forced to flee their countries for fear of persecution for their beliefs, politics, or ethnicity. Refugees are often catastrophically affected by political repression, physical and psychological torture, terror, war, loss and disappearance of, and separation from family and friends. Despite all this, if given the choice, most refugees prefer to stay in their homelands and not seek shelter in unfamiliar foreign lands, where they are often secluded, ostracized, and impoverished (American Psychological Association, 1996).

Statistics reported by Chester in 1987 indicate that an estimated 30 to 60% of world's refugees are survivors of torture. Dross (1999) has also indicated that 30% of refugees are torture survivors. Other reports have estimated that between 5 to 35% of the world's 14 million refugees have had at least one experience of torture (Basoglu, 1982). Dross (1999) states of the thousands of people around the world, who are devastated by torture every year, approximately 400,000 live in the United States today.

Information from other countries also testifies to the growth of this population worldwide. An Amnesty International report (Amnesty International, January, 2001) suggests that the majority of immigrants to the United Kingdom are asylum seekers from countries with serious human rights violations. The same report further implicates Iran, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq as having "appalling human rights records," and together, being responsible for half of the total asylum applications in the United Kingdom.

Iranian Survivors of Political Torture

Survivors of political torture are a large, increasing, and "invisible" population (Dross, 1999), and Iranian survivors of political torture are not exempt from these characteristics. Since 1979 to the present time, thousands of individuals have been imprisoned for political reasons and have suffered various types of physical and psychological torture in Iran. Use of systematic torture in that country has moved from a dictatorial policy toward the force of the holy and the divine (Millett, 1994), giving its application legitimacy and credibility. While Iran's Islamic Constitution actually prescribes certain forms of judicial torture such as public flogging, stoning, and mutilation for crimes like adultery and robbery, the savage treatment of political prisoners by that regime has surpassed that of most other oppressive systems in the world.

More than any other factor, the Iranian revolution of 1979 and its aftermath have contributed to the growth of the Iranian population worldwide (Bozorgmehr, 1998). Immigrants and exiles construed the majority of the members of the Iranian community in the United States (Ghahary & Palmer, 2000; Jalali, 1996); however, European

countries such as Sweden, France, United Kingdom, and Germany have resettled large numbers of political refugees from Iran.

Extensive studies have examined the sequelae of traumatic events among various victimized populations such as survivors of childhood sexual abuse, victims of sexual assault, and victims of natural disasters; however, research regarding the consequences of torture has not been given adequate attention. This approach is adopted despite the fact that physical and mental health implications of torture have been documented. In addition, the scarce existing studies of this form of trauma mainly cover the experience of particular groups such as the political prisoners from Turkey, Chile, and Argentina, survivors of concentration camps, and prisoners of war.

To date, no distinct, systematic psychological studies have investigated the sequelae of torture, or examined the components of coping and resilience as experienced by Iranian survivors of political torture using the sociopolitical, cultural, and relational context within which the experiences of this group of survivors are shaped. Furthermore, no Western researchers have discussed, exclusively, what tolls bearing witness to mass executions, suicides of inmates, denial of self, and living under a constant state of terror, have taken on the psychological wellbeing of this group of survivors of torture.

Limited amount of research regarding the Iranian torture survivors, as well as a cultural tendency among Iranians to express problems through somatization (Good, 1976) may create a false understanding among mental health professionals and researchers in assuming that there are less mental health issues shared by this group. Moreover, Pope and Garcia-Peltoniemi (1991) have suggested that cultural conditions influence how victims perceive and express their torture experience and its aftermath. The need for

understanding the cultural factors influencing this particular group's appraisal of their trauma and survival as well as imprisonment within the context of a religious state makes the study of this population compelling.

Implications

As suggested by Goldfled, Mollica, Pesavento, and Faraone (1988), health care providers in countries of exile such as the United States, continue to encounter an increasing number of patients who have survived torture. Furthermore, serious health implications are evident by the very nature of systematic torture being a deliberate attack on the physical and psychological well-being of the individual with often extremely severe and prolonged sequelae. In addition to the often severe and pervasive effects of torture, which oblige the need for rigorous attention to the treatment of its survivors, Kleber, Figley, and Gersons (1995) suggest that traumatization of refugees often does not end while they resettle in countries of exile. While the process of becoming accustomed to a new way of life is complex and trying for all immigrants and refugees, it is more taxing on survivors of torture, due to the psychological and physical aftereffects of their torment. The continued physical and mental risks for this vulnerable group has negative implications for health, productivity, economics, and political stability that adversely affect the whole world.

Familiarity with injuries caused by torture and its psychological and social sequelae, as well as, assessment of the potential difficulty practitioners, who work with this population, may encounter is essential if optimal care is to be provided for this traumatized group. Nevertheless, despite the confirmed severe health implications, health

care providers have in the past been indifferent to the medical and psychiatric problems that may result from involving crimes against humanity. Goldfied and colleagues (1988) report that such tendency has been documented regarding practitioners caring for concentration camp survivors, Cambodian survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime, Vietnam veterans, and Chilean survivors of torture.

Purpose of the Study

This research was designed to examine the sequelae of politically based trauma, specifically, physical and psychological torture as experienced and explicated by former political prisoners from Iran. The aim of this study was to explore how these traumatized individuals make sense of their trauma and survival and their continual work for the welfare of others. Hence, this was not solely an attempt at investigating sequelae of torture, advocacy for human rights, or concept of resilience, but it was a deliberate focus on the kind of meaning former Iranian political prisoners construct about these experiences given the context of Iranian situation. It was the intention of this study to explore how these individuals talk about their lives as related to the torture experience, how they articulate the personal, psychological, and psychosocial effects of their trauma, what do they perceive as having helped them in coping with torture and death, how do they explain the meaning of their proactive work for the welfare of others, and what is their outlook for the future.

The stories of these survivors of torture can provide valuable information for clinicians treating this traumatized population as well as survivors of other trauma. The findings can be useful in developing interventions and educational programs that may

help foster resilience and effective coping strategies that may assist in dealing with stressful situations. A major goal of this qualitative investigation is to generate hypotheses related to trauma as experienced by this group. It is hoped that the results of this investigation will expand the body of literature, which already exist on trauma and resilience, through the development of theory.

This investigation will serve as a starting ground to initiate further studies distinctly related to the development of culture-specific standardized scales for the assessment as well as culturally appropriate interventions used in the treatment of Iranian survivors of torture. Additionally, the results of this study may provide future research opportunities, which may have important implications for research and practice, with a comparative approach to examining the experiences of this group of survivors of torture and torture survivors from other countries as well as survivors of other trauma.

Finally, social implications of this study are embedded in its contribution to the defense of human rights in Iran and also worldwide, and its potential ability to redirect social debate and legislative initiatives. Most importantly, this study provides a forum through which the voices of the "invisible" and "forgotten" survivors of torture from Iran will be amplified.

Methodological Rationale

Qualitative research is a powerful way of accessing the diverse and complex emotions, cognitions, and behaviors, which are difficult to elicit or learn about by way of more conventional methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). "This method of inquiry allows for the emergence of the unexpected" (Ambert, 1994). Based on the principles of grounded

theory, the main theorem which makes the foundation of qualitative research, qualitative investigation does not begin with a preconceived assumption about the phenomenon under observation, but the investigator favors the emergence of data upon which the theory will be based.

Qualitative study makes significant contributions to empirical research and advancement of theory by giving voice to those who have not been heard before, correcting biases in earlier research, asking questions that have never been asked, introducing new epistemologies, and emphasizing the values that make up the essence of the research questions (Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner, 1995).

A qualitative approach to research on trauma and resilience introduces questions that the traditional research has not paid attention to (Hernandez, 2000). Narrative approach is the qualitative method utilized in this study of the experiences of trauma, survival and proactive human rights work of Iranian survivors of political torture. Narrative approach focuses on how the self is constructed, how it is talked about and how it is theorized in discourse. Narrative approach holds that language plays a central and constructive role in the formation of self and identity. It is based on the premise that human experience and behavior are meaningful and that in order to understand ourselves and others, we need to explore the meaning systems and the structures of meaning that make up our mind in the world (Polkinghorne, 1988). Furthermore, Polkinghorne (1983) suggests that it is difficult to investigate the domain of human phenomena by looking at parts in isolation from the whole because this realm has a systematic organization.

The main objective of this research is to delineate how survivors of torture from a particular cultural background and political ideology, traumatized within the context of a

theocracy make sense of their trauma, survival, and their continued fight for the rights of others. Therefore, by using narrative approach, the meaning of trauma and resilience will be uncovered through the personal accounts of these survivors as constructed within the language and symbolism available in the Iranian context. Their personal stories will shed light on the specific limitations and possibilities that this group faces when attempting to make sense of their experience, which are embedded within the context of cultural and sociopolitical situation in Iran. This approach will give way to a fresh, in-depth look at the experiences of survivors of trauma, a look that is beyond the constricted limitations of conventional research.

Limitations

Since qualitative study does not fit within the research standards based on observation, objectivity and generalization, the limitations of this study are addressed from a qualitative point of view. The exploratory nature of this study presents limitations in sampling and design.

Sample selection poses limitations in that the prospective participants will be selected from a group of former political prisoners nominated by another activist, based on the opinion of this person, their current participation in advocacy for the human rights, and the investigator's literature-based explanations of ways of coping. Therefore, no fixed criteria for resilience, except for participation in human rights activities, are set to determine who is resilient and who is not. In terms of the design, two limitations are encountered: (a) the interviews are conducted in Germany due to restrictions in availability of participants here in the United States, and (b) translation issues, which include translating from Persian to English and vice-versa.

The Iranian immigrants are a complex and varied group. Not only are there within group ethnic differences in this population, but the difference in political beliefs and religious convictions, as well as "social class differences and exposure to Western life style" (Jalali, 1996) can be determining factors in how these individuals respond to trauma. On that account, there are limitations in this study in terms of exclusions of certain political and religious groups; specifically, the study only includes former political prisoners who at least at the time of their imprisonment adhered to a non-religious, leftist ideology.

Inclusion of survivors of tortures from political opposition groups with adherence to the Islamic doctrine, or the clergy in favor of reforms who have become a new group of political prisoners in Iran is outside of the scope of this study. Similarly, the study does not include other groups of Iranian refugees, who have fled the country for fear of religious persecution or ties to or sympathy for the Shah of Iran, who held power before the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The above restriction in sampling is purposely inflicted due to the religious nature of some forms of torture used in the prisons of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which may have evoked aversive or non-aversive response from the prisoners based on their political and religious ideology. A detailed explanation of these methods of torture and their purpose will be presented in Chapter II.

In qualitative research, there is an interplay between research and the researcher, which is defined as the researcher's use of him/herself as an instrument of analysis. In order for this to be possible, one of the main objectives in qualitative research that is maintaining a balance between objectivity and subjectivity (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) must be held.

Since experiences of former political activity and persecution in Iran, forced migration, living in exile, and loss of family and friends connect the researcher to the study, several measures will be taken to ensure objectivity of the researcher and trustworthiness of the results. The researcher will seek objectivity via keeping field notes for assessing and addressing biases, and unfolding reactions to the participant's pain. Data from this reflexive journal will comprise the final chapter of the dissertation.

Furthermore, two bilingual research assistants, one, an expert in the field of Middle Eastern studies, and the other an expert in cross-cultural relations and immigration issues, will review all transcripts, and re-code data when indicated, to allow other perspectives in the analysis. A peer debriefer with no personal connection to the phenomenon under study will also be consulted on a regular basis to ensure objectivity. It is noteworthy to report that the dissertation committee also includes a bilingual member, an expert in the field of social psychology and bicultural experiences of Iranian immigrants.

Summary and Structure

This chapter introduced the reader to the broad context in which human rights are violated worldwide and in Iran. It also presented definitions of torture, significance and limitations of the study, and an overview of the methodology. Chapter II will provide a review of the literature on trauma and resilience. Chapter III will illustrate in detail the qualitative methodology used in the process of this investigation. The qualitative approach, the grounded theory, and narrative approach will be defined; in addition, the methods employed for analysis and development of themes will be explained. Chapter IV

will provide an overview of a history of sociopolitical situation in modern Iran, providing a contextual framework for this narrative study of trauma and resilience. Chapter V will embody the analysis of the results and the researcher's reflexive journal, and Chapter VI will present a discussion of the results and the conclusions, in addition to the utility, implications, and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This chapter offers a review of the literature on torture, related trauma, and resilience. This chapter also encompasses literature regarding ethnocultural variables as factors influencing the overall experiences of trauma survivors. The intention is to familiarize the reader with various views regarding the trauma of torture, and to make the reader aware that torture is only one of many traumas experienced by the survivors. In this regard, the experiences of uprooting and circumstances surrounding life in exile for survivors of torture will be reviewed.

It has been suggested that any scientific treatment of the subject of torture must be based on a clearly stated definition of this term. Arriving at a clear-cut definition of torture however has been deemed problematic because torture is used in a wide range of situations in which human beings induce physical and psychological suffering on others. Dross (1999), for example, cites situations such as drug trafficking, organized crimes, and satanic cult practices where torture is used to control the involved populations. This study, however, points at and is concerned with the use of systematic political torture by governments and government officials against members of political opposition groups and individuals related to them.

The 1984 United Nations (UN) Convention Against Torture described torture as any act by which the perpetrator intentionally inflicts severe physical or mental pain for

the purpose of obtaining information, confessions, punishing, intimidating, or coercing (Amnesty International, 1984). Skylv (1992) asserts that by torturing the body, it is the torturer's aim to destroy his victim's mind, and the physical injuries, pain, scars, and deformities, some times present for life, have the effect of continuing the torture long after the detention.

Political torture, the single most effective weapon against democracy, is therefore used to destroy the individual by instilling fear throughout communities; it is intended to transform the culture by creating societies based on fear, societies in which self-preservation is maintained by remaining silence. Political torture often targets labor and community leaders, students, writers, journalists, and other educated professionals, and the common threat that links these individuals is that they are tortured because they think, say, and do or represent (Dross, 1999).

Amnesty international refers to almost 100 current governments that practice, support, or turn a blind eye to state induced torture despite public condemnation of torture by their own religious and governmental officials (Amnesty International, 1984, 1999). This appalling yet neglected man-made human rights problem continues to inflict pain and anguish because not only oppressive governments profit from keeping the masses silenced through intimidation and torment, but also companies in the developed world profit from torture. For example, Amnesty International report (2000) suggests that while the United States' State Department promotes human rights, the U.S. Department of Commerce has approved export licenses to countries with documented use of systematic torture. This means that while use of torture and ownership of torture weapons are illegal in the U.S., dozens of U.S. companies are authorized to sell weapons and other

equipment among which are high-tech electroshock devices, leg iron, and serrated thumb cuffs designed to tear flesh if a detainee tries to get free, to countries where torture is regularly practiced.

While the above accounts set the stage for the readers' understanding of how the trauma of political torture is inflicted and who benefits from it, the following will provide them with different views regarding the consequences of this trauma. Saporta and van der Kolk (1992) have asserted that the principles by which torture produces its damaging consequences are those that underlie the effects of other catastrophic trauma such as kidnapping and concentration camp experiences. These authors claim that traumatic events share common features, eliciting a common psychobiological response, which is also effected by the subjective meaning of the event and the social and interpersonal environment in which the event occurs. Hence, the long-term consequences of trauma are shaped by the complex relationship between biological, psychological, and social factors.

Core of the Trauma of Torture

Saporta and van der Kolk (1992) maintain that incomprehensibility, disrupted attachment, traumatic bonding, and inescapability are four primary features of traumatic events, which account for the overpowering nature of trauma, and specifically, the overwhelming impact of the torture experience. They suggest that the core of trauma is that it overwhelms the victim's psychological and biological coping mechanisms, which occurs when internal and external coping resources are inadequate to cope with the external threat.

Incomprehensibility is defined by these authors as the inability to make sense of one's traumatic encounters, which are occurrences outside of the normal range of human knowledge and cannot be integrated into one's experiences partly due to one's assumptions about oneself and ones place in the world. These encounters overwhelm one's ability to cope. After the confrontation with violence and abuse, the victims' views of self as invincible and the world as a safe and just place can never be the same again. They suggest that in reconstructing one's view about self and the world, the individual's reaction often involves negative contemplations of oneself as worthless, helpless, and inadequate.

Saporta and van der Kolk (1992) further maintain that the experience of torture is not only inherently incomprehensible, but it is also compounded by the fact that the torturer organizes the environment to maximize confusion. Unfamiliarity of the environment, blindfolding, seclusion, and unpredictability, all weaken the victim's ability to make sense of the experience. As the torturers shatter the victim's prior beliefs about the self and the world, they can force on them new organizing schema of self as helpless and submissive. The authors claim that the victim may be receptive to the torturer's construction of reality because of a grave need to reduce the devastating terror and arousal and to reestablish a sense of order and security.

Regarding the role of attachment in coping with the aftermath of trauma, Saporta and van der Kolk (1992) suggest that human beings have a biologically based need to form attachments with others increases in times of stress and danger. Referring to the works of Becker (1973, as cited in Saporta & van der Kolk, 1992) and Fox (1974, as cited in Saporta & van der Kolk, 1992), Saporta and van der Kolk assert that pain, fatigue, fear,

and loss motivate efforts to draw greater care from others, and those with less adequate internal coping resources during these times may cling to others to reconstitute a sense of stability and safety. The authors further state that stable attachments may help to limit overwhelming physiologic arousal, and prior experiences can help make sense of what has happened. They suggest that the inability to turn to others in the aftermath of trauma is a loss of the major external coping resources that people have available.

Several other authors have also demonstrated the relationship between the degree of posttraumatic dysfunction and loss of attachment and interpersonal supports (Pynoos & Eth, 1985). Traumatized people often show lasting difficulties in developing subsequent relationships (Lindy, 1987, as cited in Saporta & van der Kolk, 1992) and tend to alternate between withdrawing socially or attaching impulsively and maladaptively; this undermining of interpersonal resources in turn maintain the traumatic situation.

Saporta and van der Kolk (1992) hold that traumatic break of interpersonal attachments is also vital in the torture experience in which victims are kept in isolation and their captors threaten them with the capture and death of family and friends. In government-sanctioned torture, the betrayal of the victim by the government can be viewed as the loss of an important attachment bond both real and symbolic. The authors claim that in spite of one's conscious attitudes about one's government, there tends to be a hope or aspiration that will embody parental qualities such as the provision of the protection and security. The betrayal of these expectations and thus loss of this form of attachment compounds the impact of torture. They also suggest that considering the role of attachment in overcoming trauma the strong inner ties to groups, which share political

or religious ideals that may give meaning to their suffering, and may to some degree buffer the controlling influence of torture.

"Torture often poses a conflict between one's self-image and the behavior that is deemed necessary for survival" (Kordon, Edelman, Lagos, Nicoletti, Kersner, & Groshaus, 1992). Saporta and van der Kolk (1992) state that one of the most destructive effects of torture is that in the attempt to maintain attachment bonds. In doing this, they state, victims turn to the nearest source of hope to regain a state of psychological and physiologic calmness, and under situations of sensory and emotional deprivation, victims may develop strong emotional ties to their tormentors (Saporta and van der Kolk, 1992). Saporta and van der Kolk (1992) maintain that the need to stay attached contributes to the denial and dissociation of the traumatic experience; in order to preserve an image of safety and to avoid losing the hope of the existence of a protector, victims may then begin to organize their lives around keeping a bond with and appeasing their captors.

Other views regarding the response to trauma of torture have been offered. Milgram (1986, as cited in Melamed, Melamed, & Bohoustsos, 1990) argued that the threat of losing one's control over events and self is what leads to severe crises, and that the threat to one's belief system has the adverse effect of demoralizing the individual. The trauma response occurs when all escape routs are cut off (Saporta and van der Kolk, 1992). When there is nothing that the victim can do to terminate the massive threat to safety, his ability to cope is overwhelmed. Torture is systematically practiced in an unpredictable and inescapable manner (Bosuglu & Mineka, 1992). Little the victim can do can control the infliction of the torture; even cooperation and confessions rarely bring an end to the torment.

Melamed et al. (1990) also suggest that torture involves removing victim's sense of control. While focusing on the uncontrollability of the onset and termination of victimization Peterson and Seligman (1983, as cited in Melamed et al., 1990) conclude that unpredictable onset and inescapability of the traumatic event results in coping attempts that are futile and also results in decreased self-esteem and a sense of self-blame.

Saporta and van der Kolk (1992) further claim that the inability to escape or control the stress contributes to the flow of terror and physiologic arousal. They propose that severe or prolonged stress may then lead to a chronic inability to modulate basic biological safety and alarm mechanisms. The traumatized person may experience an alternation of numbing of emotional responses with hyper-reactive emotional and physiologic responses, or may show hyper-reactive responses superimposed on a baseline of numbing and dissociation. The seeming inability to modulate biological alarm and arousal mechanism may play a role in the tendency of trauma victims to react to stimuli.

Moreover, Melamed et al. (1990) state that the physical and psychological duration of torture experiences can determine the victim's posttraumatic disturbances. Similarly, Saporta and van der Kolk (1992) propose that the severity of the response depends on the duration, repetitiveness, and severity of the trauma. Relying on the data from traumatized animals, these authors predict that a history of maternal deprivation, repeated separations, or early traumas increase some people's vulnerability to the damaging effects of torture, and may increase the risk of developing PTSD in response to later life stress.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder or Not

Mollica (1992) states that as the health care of torture survivors has emerged as a new medical specialty, the recent discoveries regarding the torture survivor as patient has led to a fundamental conflict between two opposing worldviews. One view sees torture as an extraordinary life experience, which is capable of causing in any individual a wide range of physical and psychological suffering and related disability. Hence, this view holds that there is a universal need for medical care for all torture survivors. The opponents of this worldview on the other hand, while acknowledging the injuries inflicted by torture, argue that since these injuries and psychological reactions are normal responses to abnormal life threatening experiences, the torture survivor should not be stigmatized by medical and psychiatric diagnosis and treatment.

In addition, there are others who hold that torture is a political phenomenon and therefore cannot be classified in psychiatric terms. In this regard, Basoglu (1992) asserts that all traumatic events, whether political or non-political have a psychological impact which may evolve into chronic, disabling symptoms. Others have also demonstrated that torture has psychological sequelae similar to those experienced by victims of other traumatic events (Goldfeld et al, 1988; Pope & Garcia-Peltoniemi, 1991; Randall & Lutz, 1991). Baker (1992) suggests that the trap for anyone involved is to take the extreme position of either (a) assuming that all tortured refugees required specialist psychiatric and clinical help, or (b) that only initial advice, guidance or practical resources are needed to ensure satisfactory coping and resettlement. There are not either or options, both should be available and offered based on ongoing assessment and need.

In the recent years, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has been identified and recognized as a distinct clinical dysfunction (American Psychiatric Association [APA], DSM-III, 1980; DSM-III-R, 1987; DSM-IV, 1994). According to the DSM-IV (APA, 1994), PTSD refers to a disorder that may occur when a person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which:

> the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others, [and] the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror. (p. 209)

Furthermore, the DSM-IV holds that the traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in a number of ways. This representation of PTSD has resulted in debate and controversy, since some researchers and practitioners find its definition or operational clarity problematic. release including further persecution or exile (Basoglu, 1992; Somnier, Vesti, Kastrup, and Kemp-Genefke (1992) suggest that the most important diagnostic controversy in the trauma field is about the fact that the PTSD syndrome does not include those symptoms most often observed in survivors of prolonged interpersonal violence such as childhood incest, repeated domestic violence, prolonged captivity, or protracted torture. They further state that the DSM-IV provides a *generic theory*, unifying the single stress approaches, which indicates different types of trauma may induce similar symptomatology. Yehuda and McFarlane (1995) hold, "acute responses to stress are not homogeneous and depend on variables other than those associated with the focal trauma" (p. 5). These authors suggest that the nature of biological changes that serve to describe

the state of protracted or unrelenting symptoms in response to traumatic event are far more complex than what was originally thought.

Likewise, Herman (1993) has argued that the literature on survivors of prolonged political, domestic, or sexual victimization suggests that the sequelae of prolonged victimization does not fit readily into the existing criteria for PTSD, and that current diagnostic formulation of this diagnosis derives mainly from observations of survivors of relatively restricted traumatic events such as natural disasters and rape and fails to capture the symptomatic manifestations of prolonged, repeated, trauma, or the alterations of personality that occurs during extended imprisonment.

Asserting that the symptom picture in survivors of prolonged trauma often appears to be more complex, diffuse, and persistent, Herman (1993) suggests these survivors often develop characteristic personality changes, deformations of relatedness and identity, and vulnerability to repeat harm, both self inflicted and at the hands of others. She proposes an alternative diagnostic formulation, called the Disorder of Extreme Stress, which emphasizes excessive somatization, dissociation, changes in affect, pathological changes in relationships, pathological changes in identity, self-injurious or suicidal behavior, and revictimization.

Somnier and colleagues (1992) point to another weakness in the PTSD theory, proposing that the essential symptoms may be overlooked in a process of establishing the criteria for the diagnosis of PTSD, since the survivors' answers may be biased by the semi-structured questions posed. In addition, these authors declare that torture is a unique form of trauma, a deliberate attack aimed at destroying the individual's identity, and PTSD reduces complex political and historical problems experienced by survivors into

symptoms at the individual psychological level (Punamaki, 1989, as cited in Somnier et al., 1992). Similarly, Basoglu (1992) has maintained that torture as a traumatic event is often only one in a series of stressful life events experienced by the survivors and that the term posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) seems to fail to capture the real nature of traumatization in torture survivors.

Marsella, Friedman, Gerrity, and Scurfield (1996) maintain that focusing on stress or trauma, and on a unique and expectable response to it, may seem appealing because it performs three simplifications: (a) *morally*, it simplifies the issue of responsibility, guilt, and blame that afflicts survivors and authorizes their guiltless anger or forgiveness, (b) *scientifically*, it suggests a linear causal model agreeable to animal models and simple experiments, and (c) *therapeutically*, it endorses clinicians' assigning a wide range of problems to a single injury and therefore to organize treatment along clear lines that may include both moral and scientific models. These authors argue that when circumstances of the people who are the exemplars of PTSD such as tortured refugees are considered, however, it can be seen that not only are these situations immensely complex and simply caricatured as stressful or traumatic, but also the responses of individuals to them are equally complex and varied.

In this regard, Kirmayer (1996) uses the example of individuals who escaped the killing fields of Cambodia, stating that if the complexity of human predicament is to be respected in clinical practice and research, clinicians and researchers must understand the impact of trauma in terms of the disruption of the ongoing construction of a coherent and valued self through relations with one's community. He asserts that these individuals did not only suffer from trauma and torture, injury and deprivation, nor did they even just

suffer from individual loss, but from a collective loss of meaning and social structure, which puts them in a situation of continuing catastrophe.

In addition, Jenkins (1996) points out another dimension belonging to the complex experience of people who are victims of politically based trauma. Referring to *collective trauma*, Jenkins states that individualized accounts of trauma in the context of long-term political violence can never be fully adequate in understanding traumatized suffering manifest as various forms of psychopathology, it may also be valid to consider psychosocial trauma as "the traumatic crystallization in persons and groups of inhuman social relations" (Martin-Baro, 1988, as cited in Jenkins, 1996).

Ethnocultural Influences

It has been stated that to study consequences of torture, aside from the need for a clear definition of this phenomenon, one needs to take into account the various dimensions of the trauma such as pre-arrest conditions, difficulties during imprisonment, and additional factors after release including further persecution or exile (Basoglu, 1992; Somnier, Vesti, Kastrup, & Kemp-Genefke, 1992). Moreover, there is an agreement that ethnocultural factors also need to be taken into account due to their determining role in the appraisal as well as their influence on ways of coping in the aftermath of trauma (Basoglu, 1992; Pope & Garcia-Peltoniemi, 1991; Somnier et al, 1992).

Ethnocentricity has been defined by Marsella and colleagues (1996) as the tendency to view one's own way of thinking or behaving as the right, correct, or normal way, and to reject all others as incorrect or of limited accuracy or value. These authors suggest that as a result of ethnocentric bias, concepts and methods of measurements of

PTSD may have only limited cross-cultural relevancy and usefulness. They elaborate on this issue by stating that ethnocentrically biased concepts do not encompass or include the experiences of non-Western people, particularly with regard to their "notions of health, illness, personhood, and normality as well as their expressions of symptomatology and phenomenological experiences of disorders such as PTSD" (p. 116), since virtually all of the theory, research, and measurement on PTSD has been generated by Euro-American, European, Israeli, and Australian researchers and professionals.

Marsella and colleagues (1996) further state that anyone interested in the study of PTSD must eventually confront the role of ethnocultural factors in the etiology, distribution, expression, course, outcome, and treatment, since ethnocultural factors such as cultural conceptions of health and disease, perception and definitions of trauma, conceptions of the person, and standards concerning normality and abnormality influence all aspects of survivors response to the traumatic event. Moreover, they maintain that basic epistemological assumptions, language, activity contexts, reward systems, and other fundamental variables that are involved in the social construction of reality, and caution must be exercised by clinicians and researchers when applying the PTSD construct where great ethnocultural differences exist.

Marsella and colleagues (1996) further suggest that although a universal neurobiological response to traumatic events most likely exists, there is considerable ethnocultural variations in the expressive and phenomenological dimensions of the PTSD experiences, especially the intrusive, avoidant/numbing, and arousal pattern aspects.

While it is essential to be aware of ethnocultural differences among trauma victims, it is crucial to acknowledge that among ethnocultural minorities the differences

in behavior within a given ethnocultural group are dramatic and profound, and any effort to group people together for research on the basis of the largest possible ethnocultural dimension (i.e., Arab, Asian, Black, Hispanic) contributes excessive error variance to the design. Even within these larger categories, the shared culture, which is the learned behavior, artifacts, roles, values, beliefs, attitudes, cognitive styles, epistemologies, consciousness pattern, and institutions transmitted from one generation to another to promote individual and group adjustment and adoption (Marsella, 1990, as cited in Marsella et al., 1996), may be minimal because of geographical, genetic, and psychocultural variation. Therefore, variations and patterns within an ethnocultural tradition and heritage must be emphasized.

Marsella and colleagues (1996) have proposed that the measurement of PTSD remains a serious problem because the existing instruments often do not include indigenous idioms of distress and causal conceptions of PTSD and related disorders. For example, it is known that many non-Western ethnic groups present symptoms somatically rather than psychologically or existentially, and people from other cultures do not subscribe to the same version of mind-body dualism that informs both Western medicine and the everyday concept of the person (Kirmayer, 1996). Hence, self-reported or interview-based rates of somatic symptoms may be higher in some groups not simply because of greater levels of somatic distress but also because somatic symptoms are used to talk about and negotiate matters other than bodily illness. While this idiomatic use of symptoms allows people to draw attention to and metaphorically comment on the nature of their dilemmas, when reduced to symptoms of a disorder, this meaningful and social dimension of distress may be lost (Kirmayer, 1996).

For example, while referring to the experiences of refugees who have survived torture Baker (1992) suggests that the refugees' cultural background seems to influence the way they cope with the aftermath of torture and it also determines the chances for successful integration into the new society. He also suggests that although no systematic investigation have been carried out, it has been observed that refugees may be better off psychologically living in a host culture similar to their own than in a new society of a very different cultural orientation.

Life in Exile

While there are controversies over the definitional matter of PTSD, many researchers and practitioners believe that exposure to traumatic events, in the absence of psychological and social resources that mediate their severity and effects, may result in both immediate and long-term harmful and destructive outcome for the individuals, families, communities, and nations. Often, torture survivors who flee to exile after their release (Fischman & Ross, 1990; Gonsalves, 1990) are outcasts from their society and do not receive the validation and support from their countrymen needed to overcome traumatization. For these survivors who manage to escape to other countries or who are sent into exile, symptoms and signs may assume a new social meaning and the problems related to forced exile often aggravate the psychological symptoms (Baker, 1992).

Baker (1992) cites a number of writers such as Davidson (1985) and Danieli (1982) to indicate that the refugee experience and forced migration is comparable to a form of bereavement, which has lifetime and intergenerational effects on the individual, the family, and victim communities. For the refugee and the forced migrant, Baker (1992)

further states, the choice to escape and "to leave everything that has emotional, social, practical, cultural and perhaps spiritual significance is rarely a real choice at all," marking this experience with trauma.

> Refugees are dominated by one feeling and that is a painful, traumatic and deep sense of loss. Loss of what is obvious and tangible and external such as possessions, a home, work, role, status, life style, a language, loved members of the family or other close relationships, and a loss that is less obvious, 'internal' and 'subjective' such as loss of trust in the self and others, loss of self-esteem, self-respect and personal identity. (Baker, 1985, as cited in Baker, 1992)

Building on Eisenbruch's (1991) notion of cultural bereavement, Kirmayer (1996) asserts, "trauma is at once a sociopolitical event, a psychophysiological process, a bodily and emotional experience, an explanation, and a narrative theme." He suggests that while trauma is talked about as if it can be restricted and isolated in time and place, the processes of coping and adaptation draw it out over time so that one is faced not with simple connection between cause and effect, but with feedback loops in which traumatic memories and attributions are used to make sense of experience and uphold social positions.

In addition, threat or experience of violence either before flight or during it compounds the trauma. Baker suggests that if normal mourning processes cannot occur, the likelihood of a delayed mourning reaction may take place. When this happens, the person can remain in a state of anger and repressed grief for many years and the psychosocial effects may manifest themselves in the person's incapacity to function

adequately as a parent, spouse, employee, employer and citizen, and he/she is likely to experience a series of strained relationships.

Baker (1992) talks about the "triple trauma paradigm of the tortured refugee" while he cautions the reader against stereotyping this group in general. He states that the term refugee portrays an image, often promoted by the media, of a depressed, powerless, unskilled and poverty stricken person, and asserts that such a picture is both naive and usually untrue. Baker maintains that the label "refugee" in actuality says nothing about how an individual has reacted to forced migration. Some refugees, Baker states, have highly developed occupational skills, higher levels of training and education, and given the smallest of chances will quickly demonstrate their ability to resettle positively and make a useful contribution as a new citizen in the host country. He further asserts, not every person who is forced to uproot is necessarily traumatized by the experience, "though there is a strongly held view that the tortured refugee remains tortured."

While it has been said that refugees often suffer from physical and mental trauma (Olness, 1998), experience of working with refugees suggests that not all people exposed to the same traumatic events develop PTSD; some individuals grow through their traumas and as a consequence become more humane and mature human beings (Baker, 1992). It is as if the experience has actually enabled the psychological and social self to gain in strengths and the insights derived provide a base for a successful occupational and personal life (Movschenson, 1988 as cited in Baker, 1992). However, it is not known what percentage of survivors becomes successful. The danger of any stereotype is that it can take hold in negative ways influencing policy and relationships in a detrimental way (Baker, 1992).

The experience of torture is the second major trauma, which is superimposed on to the refugee experience itself. Massive loss has to be coped with along with what has been described as 'paradoxical' or 'survivor's guilt' (Lifton, 1968, as cited in Baker, 1992). Baker suggests that the tortured refugee often asks an unanswerable question, 'why have I survived when so many others have perished?' In the long term, clinical research suggests that the majority of survivors have a range of physical and psychological symptoms which may be linked to the severe trauma they have experienced or be complicated by the psychological state of the person prior to becoming a survivor.

Helpers of victims of torture in exile have observed that these individuals can remain relatively symptom free for months or years during which time painful feelings can be denied or repressed. Asylum and refugee status is sought in this "symptom-free interval" and much energy is expended in achieving satisfactory initial resettlement if it is granted. It is all too easy to assume that because there are no obvious symptoms there are no psychological problems. These are likely to emerge in the medium and long term when the relationship web has been partially re-spun, and resettlement seems to have been achieved.

Despite their devastating torment, victims of torture may survive and recover using any number of diverse resources and coping strategies. Past experience has shown that traditional health care services do not adequately meet the needs of torture survivors (Sommier et al., 1992). Consequently, some researchers have suggested that it may be more useful to attempt to find what model of treatment "works best under what circumstances for what person with what cognitive and related coping styles who has

suffered what forms of torture and who has what resources available" (Strupp & Bergin, 1969, as cited in Pope & Garcia-Peltoniemi, 1991).

Coping and Resilience

The construct that characterizes individuals who survive stressful and maladaptive situations is called resilience. Resilience is a word deeply rooted in the world of adversity and distressing life events and circumstances. According to Jew, Green, and Kroger (1992), in the absence of environmental stressors, resiliency is not evident. Literature on resiliency indicates that life-threatening events often confer surprising advantages. For example, resilient children are seen as those who overcome identity issues, depression, self-esteem deficits, and the long-term effects of child abuse (Egeland, Sroufe, & Erickson, 1983, as cited in Jew & Gren, 1998).

The American Psychological Association (1996) published a report indicating that studies to date suggest that there is no single source of resilience or vulnerability; rather, many interacting factors including individual genetic predispositions, which express themselves in temperament, personality, and intelligence, as well as qualities such as social skills and self-esteem come into play where resilience is concerned. In addition, environmental influences are said to affect and shape these individual variables. For example, through early experience and bonding with parents or other caregivers, children form expectations that shape later social experiences. These processes of social learning often influence self-esteem and behavior.

The report further suggests that personality research on sexually abused girls has indicated that certain personality traits help decrease the negative effects of abuse.

Studies of attachment, as reported by the American Psychological Association (1996) have shown close personal relationships to moderate vulnerability and resilience. Researchers have found that differences in infant attachment security, as measured on a brief behavioral test, can have long-term mental and emotional consequences. For example, children classified as securely attached to a caregiver during infancy are likely to be more empathic, compliant, un-conflicted, and generally competent in their relationships with adults and peers, and will later approach problem-solving tasks more positively and with greater persistence than will those children who are insecurely attached.

Children with insecure attachments on the other hand tend to have trouble relating to other people because their behavior is often either hostile and distant or overly dependent. These tendencies may extend into adolescence and adulthood, influencing significant social relationships as well as basic attitudes toward life. Eagle (1987) attributed the resilience of concentration camp survivors to their capacity to preserve attachment bonds with others, "Even when bonds with others are internalized abstractly in the forms of values and other cultural ties."

Low self-esteem has also been identified as a factor playing an important role in mental illnesses. Interpersonal factors such as assessments of one's physical appearance, the behavior of parents and other caregivers, and the school environment that lead people to devalue themselves, may contribute to individuals becoming depressed, and even to consider suicide. Kordon, Edelman, Lagos, Nicoletti, Kersner, and Groshaus (1992) state that torture survivors who refuse to comply with the torturer's demands (not having cried in front of the torturer, not having revealed information) have managed to maintain their

self-esteem, and those whose self-esteem is affected, may experience depression, loss of self-confidence, anxiety, and even suicide attempts.

PTSD responses may be mediated by violation of previously held assumptions of invulnerability and personal safety (Foa, Zinbarg, & Rothbaum, 1992, and Janoff-Bulman, 1992, as cited in Basoglu, Parker, Tasdemir, Özmen, Sahin, Ceyhanli, Incesu, & Sarimurat, 1996), inability to find an acceptable explanation for the trauma (Lifton & Olson, 1976, as cited in Basoglu, et al. 1996), and violation of beliefs that the world is a just and orderly place (Lerner & Miller, 1978, as cited in Basoglu, et al. 1996). Foa and colleagues (1992, as cited in Basoglu et al, 1996) state that responses to stress are influenced by the person's capacity to process an experience and attach meaning to it. A study conducted by Basoglu and colleagues (1996) found relatively low levels of traumatization among a group of torture survivors despite severe torture, pointing to the possible protective role of belief systems and political ideology in PTSD.

Basoglu and colleagues (1996) and others have explained that unpredictable stressors often have significantly more aversive impact than do predictable stressors (Basoglu & Mineka, 1992), and most trauma events that negate beliefs about the world are also unpredictable. Unpredictability of the stressor may be the critical factor in the traumatization process, violation of beliefs being a secondary phenomenon. Asserting that if violation of beliefs regarding safety, trust, and justice play a role in PTSD, as the cognitive theory of trauma as proposed by Janoff-Bulman (1992, as cited in Basoglu et al., 1996) and Foa and colleagues (1992, as cited in Basoglu et al., 1996) hold, the *remarkable resilience* of the torture survivors against extreme torture may be explained,

at least in part, by lack of beliefs concerning safety, trust, and justice, and also by the fact that arrest and torture were not unexpected for most of the torture survivors.

In relation to coping styles, derived from his clinical experience with victims of organized violence, Baker (1992) has proposed three conceptual tools of negative, adaptive, and constructive survival. He has suggested that negative survival refers to the personal and social behavior, which restricts the individual and inhibits social functioning. Baker states that such a behavior traps the torture victim into the negative components of the trauma, and it typically leads to behavior that is reflected in *extreme egotism* with the trauma coloring virtually every aspect of the person's life, including excessive talking about the experience, or making it a taboo subject never to be talked about. Baker further proposes that such individuals engage in excessively submissive behavior or the alternative of extreme aggression in personal relationships at home and/or work. These behaviors result in virtually all of their relationships becoming severely stressed and the person is left increasingly alone.

The adaptive survivor, Baker asserts, appears to have made a sound adjustment both personally and occupationally. However, when examined closely, it becomes apparent that the adaptation is still essentially egocentric and self-serving. The adaptive survivor makes real effort to recreate the relationship web, but basically to re-create everything as closely as possible to what was lost. This behavior is usually rationalized on the grounds of protection of the culture. Baker suggests that such adaptation involves little thinking, acting, or feeling beyond the trauma the individual, family, or community has experienced, and that what is seen is massive energy being expended on anything to do with their own group via fund-raising, or massive concern when something happens in

the country of origin. However, disinterest, silence, and minimal involvement are the typical responses when other minority groups are being oppressed. Seemingly well adjusted and successful in personal and occupational roles, these individuals have not been able to use their traumatic experiences to develop general principles of sound human relationships or a commitment to universal human rights.

Baker calls the third survival pattern constructive, which refers to a kind of survival response that draws lessons and insight from the trauma, which positively serves the person in all relationships. Constructive survivors seem to work through their traumas and as a result develop deep levels of sensitivity, compassion, as well as outstanding understanding and empathy for the human condition (Levi, 1987, 1989, as cited in Baker, 1992). This, Baker asserts, does not mean that the constructive survivors forget or repress their trauma, but it means that they use it to learn and to teach the inhumanity that human beings can all partake in certain circumstances. These individuals tend to become socially involved in many ways, depending on temperament, through creative writing, art, or direct political involvement. They fit the description of mental health as someone "who is functioning at a high level of behavioral and emotional adjustment and adaptiveness" (Reber, 1985, as cited in Baker, 1992).

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the nature of the trauma of torture, controversies around classification and definition of this trauma, ethnocultural factors, experience of exile, and coping and resilience in the face of trauma.

Torture is a complex, multidimensional traumatic experience, which is inflicted with the aim of destroying the victim's mind. There are various views regarding this trauma. Some believe that torture is a political phenomenon and therefore the torture victim should not be marked with psychiatric labels. Others suggest that regardless of torture being a political construct, it still adversely affects the victim's physiological, psychological and social systems, and as such, treatment needs to be provided for all torture survivors.

Another controversy surrounds the DSM diagnosis of PTSD. It is proposed by many that this diagnosis does not adequately encompass the complex experiences of victims of torture. Additionally, torture is said to be only one of many traumatic encounters of the survivors, uprooting, pre-detention experiences as well as other traumatic events add to the face of this trauma. The diagnosis of PTSD is said to not only reduce the trauma of torture to the level of one single event, but it is also said to ignore the collective sociopolitical and cultural context of the trauma.

While experience of torture devastates the victim, and affects various aspects of the survivors' life, many individuals continue to show signs of healthy functioning even after this experience. Research has suggested that individual personality factors such as temperament, self-esteem as well as attachment styles can contribute to one's resilience in the face of trauma. However, as it has been suggested that ethnocultural differences determine and contribute to one's appraisal of trauma, views regarding illness, health, and one's responsibility in the face of collective trauma. It remains to be seen what factors are salient in the experiences of Iranian survivors of torture, how they view their traumatic experience, and what contributes to their resilience.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This qualitative investigation was heuristic in nature and theory originated

through data analysis and emergence of themes. This was an in-depth look at the meaning

of trauma and resilience as contrived by Iranian survivors of political torture currently in

exile and involved in various levels of advocacy for abolishing the violation of human

rights. Due to lack of empirical research on this newly arrived group of refugees in the

Western world, in addition to the "forbidden" nature of "acknowledging" or holding

dialogue about the government's use of systematic torture, inside that country, a

phenomenological study of this particular group was warranted.

The focus of this chapter is on familiarizing the reader with the details of this

study's methodological approach; in doing so, this chapter affords a description of the

epistemological basis for choosing in-depth interviewing as the instrument for the

investigation of the meaning of experiences of others. In addition, this chapter provides

explanations regarding participant selection, the interview process, choice of narrative

approach for the analysis and interpretation of the data, as well as a history concerning

the development of the researcher's interest and values as related to the subject matter of

this research.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative methodology provides researchers with the opportunity to study the phenomenon as they occur naturally; therefore, rather than manipulating the studied phenomenon, qualitative method seeks to "describe" it. Schmid (1981, as cited in Krefting, 1991) explained qualitative investigation to be the study of the empirical world from the viewpoint of the person under study. Two assumptions of qualitative inquiry as proposed by Schmid are that individuals are influenced by the physical, sociocultural, and psychological environment, and that behavior goes beyond what is observed by the investigator. Subjective meanings and perceptions of the participants are of significant importance in qualitative research, and it is the researcher's responsibility to access them.

Kirk and Miller (1986) have also asserted that the essence of qualitative research is to watch people in their own environment and to interact with them in their own language, and on their own terms; in addition, Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) have stated that qualitative inquiry is concerned with examining the process of experience and its meaning from the point of view of the participant. Similar to these authors, Polkinghorne (1983) has also suggested that qualitative inquiry provides rich, in-depth, and lucid descriptions in the natural language of the phenomenon under study.

Grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) is the most influential qualitative theory (Hill et al., 1997), which is based on the premise that related constructs are discovered and hypotheses about the phenomenon under study are formed in the process of data collection and analysis. In this regard, the qualitative researchers do not begin the research with preconceived hypotheses and are not limited to fit the data into

predetermined categories; rather, there is an allowance for the categories to emerge from the data, and to grow and change as researchers increase their understanding of the data.

Qualitative research is pluralistic, consisting of variety of approaches, some of which include phenomenology, ethnography, life history, and historical research. While within the qualitative method various forms of inquiry are used, narrative approach to qualitative study of phenomenon was used as the primary investigative method in the present study.

In the words of Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998), " narrative research differs significantly from its positivistic counterparts in its underlying assumptions that there is neither a single, absolute truth in human reality nor one correct reading or interpretation of a text. The narrative approach advocates pluralism, relativism, and subjectivity" (p. 2). The narrative approaches are a part of social constructivist paradigm, which considers self as inextricably reliant on the language, which people use every day to make sense of themselves and others.

The social constructivist model places focus on methods of constructing the self. This paradigm differs from traditional views, which see self as existing either externally in terms of behavior or internally as an inner self, in the way of asserting that individuals interpret the events around them in terms of connections to or relationships with others and the world around them. On that account, this paradigm asks the question of how is the self talked about and theorized in discourse as opposed to what is the true nature of the self (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 102). Similarly, narrative approaches recognize that language plays a constructive role in the formation of self and identity (Crossly, 2000),

and put emphasis upon the interconnection between self and social structure, and principally between self and language.

The succeeding segment offers a more in-depth explanation regarding the basic premise of narrative research and its pertinence for the study of Iranian survivors of political torture currently involved in fight for the rights of others.

Narrative Inquiry

Personal narrative explicitly refers to talk that is organized around one's vital life events, "many of times when there has been a gap between ideal and real, self and society" (Riessman, 1993), and in the words of Goffman (1959, as cited in Riessman, 1993), personal narrative is ultimately a self-representation.

While narratives are universal (Roth, 1993) and natural ways of talking about one's life events, some experiences are so difficult for people to talk about that they may not even have access to words that can describe these experiences. Herman (1993) for example asserts that political conditions constrain particular events from being narrated, since people usually protect themselves by "putting away" the memory of atrocities from their awareness. Riessman (1993) also states that survivors of political torture, war, and sexual crimes silence themselves and are silenced because their stories are too difficult to tell and listen to. She further proposes that one reason for these individuals not to talk about their "terrorizing violations" is that others may not consider their experiences as assaults.

Iranian survivors of political torture have been in a unique position of invisibility from the eyes of not only the people of Iran, but also those of the world's. Several

conditions have contributed to this invisibility and self-imposed as well as other-imposed silence. The government of Iran has warned the survivors against ever reporting or talking about their torture experience. Until recent years when the reformist newspapers in Iran, which are now closed down and their publishers' jailed, began to report incidents of torture, the general Iranian public was in total dark about what took place in the political prisons.

In addition, in the political prisons of the Islamic Republic of Iran raping a girl is used to literally prepare her for death by execution. As religious law prohibits the execution of virgins, thousands of mock marriages were performed in the prisons to legitimize the raping of female activists before sending them to be executed. Due to strong cultural values prohibiting premarital sex, many female survivors of political torture who were sexually assaulted but whose lives were spared, have never talked about or acknowledged this violation.

It is also of grave importance to point out that while psychological services tailored to the needs of survivors of political torture are nonexistent in Iran, the inability to articulate the extent and depth of ones experiences in a foreign language as well as lack of culturally appropriate services has prevented many of the exiled survivors to seek psychological help in the countries of exile.

These reasons in addition to other contributing factors such as political and economic policies and interests of the "world's powers," which have historically placed the well-being and the interests of the third world nations, and similarly that of Iranian populace's last, has contributed further to the existence of a regime whose aim has been to silence a nation. Use of narrative inquiry in studying the experiences of this group

provided the participants with the opportunity to break their silence and to begin to narrate what the torturers forced them to keep a secret, and to give name to the experiences that were deemed unspeakable.

The value of personal narrative is embedded in that it is subjective, perspective-ridden, and grounded in time, place, and personal experience. Therefore, people use personal narratives to make sense of themselves by describing the road to the present and pointing the way to the future (Josselson, 1995). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that in qualitative inquiry the use of human instrument is the primary method through which information is gathered. Narrative approaches give eminence to human instrument and imaginativeness, by holding that the construction of narratives is not only about recounting the information that's stored in memory, but it is a subjective experience through which memory is organized to deliberately reconstruct the meaning of events and actions in one's life.

Through the use of personal narratives, Iranian survivors of political torture contrived the meaning of their experiences subjectively, and the researcher relied on their interpretations, explanations, and perspectives as opposed to trying to fit their information into predetermined categories that are set up based on the experiences of others, categories that may not even have room or appreciation for the particularities that rise from the context which circumfuses the experiences of this group.

According to Josselson (1995), narrative represents a process, "a self in conversation with itself and with its world over time." Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also speak of temporality of narrative, suggesting that not only an experience is temporal but also experiences taken collectively are temporal. This is why, they propose, the object

of narrative analysis is "undergo day-to-day experiences that are contextualized within longer-term historical narrative" (p. 19). Narratives tell not only about past actions but also about how individuals understand those actions. A major contribution of narrative analysis is the study of general social phenomena through a focus on their embodiment in specific life stories.

Riessman (1993) suggests that studying narratives is useful for what they reveal about social life. "Culture speaks itself" through the narrators' stories, Riessman suggests, while adding that by studying narratives we can examine oppression and other practices of power that may be taken for granted by individual speakers. Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992, as cited in Riessman, 1993) have also suggested that while narrators speak in terms that seem natural, we can analyze how culturally and historically related the terms they use are.

Similarly, for the Iranian survivors of political torture, their stories not only shed light on what happened to them at a given time in the past, but their accounts also revealed the process through which they became the people they are today. Their narratives told us why they saw the future the way they did, and they enlightened us about the Iranian historical, sociopolitical, and cultural context within which their experiences were born.

Some narrative approaches trust language to be profoundly prolific of reality and not solely a trivial instrument for demonstrating meaning. Language is believed to be used by the informant in building narration for reconstruction of a coherent self that may have been interrupted, disembodied, or disrupted by life's events. Through the use of personal narratives, the political torture survivors from Iran, whose lives have been

interrupted by imprisonment and violated by torture and other forms of repression and trauma, had an opportunity to use their own language for reconstruction of a coherent self.

This study was influenced by and used the narrative analysis approach as described by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998), who in their approach to methodology of life-story research assert that stories are usually constructed around a core of facts or life events, yet allow a wide periphery for the freedom of individuality and creativity in selection, addition to, emphasis on, and interpretation of these remembered facts.

Moreover, this study built on these authors' assertion that the life story that is provided in an interview is but one instance of the life story. Hence, it was believed that while the researcher obtained and documents the life story in one single, frozen text, the inner existing identity of the narrator did not remain still and unchanged. Furthermore, in line with the suggestion made by Lieblich and colleagues (1998), this researcher believed that each created story was influenced by the context (i.e., the aim of the interview, the nature of the audience, mood of the narrator) within which it was constructed. Lastly, this researcher's stand was aligned with that of these authors, who asserted that by studying and interpreting self-narratives, the researcher could access not only the individual identity and its systems of meaning but also the teller's culture and social world.

For the analysis of the narratives in this study, Lieblich et al.'s (1998) proposed methods of holistic-form and categorical-content modes of analysis were followed. These modes of analysis will be explained in this chapter in the section titled "Narrative Analysis."

Sources of Data

Selection of Participants

The naturalistic method of inquiry and narrative approach to qualitative research influenced this study; therefore, selection of participants was based on purposeful sampling. This meant that participants were carefully selected based on their understanding as well as their depth of experience with the phenomenon of interest, and as Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicates that all sampling was conducted with the purpose of gaining as much information as possible. Based on Patton's (1990) guidelines for purposeful sampling, the following criteria were taken into account when selecting the participants:

1.   *Nomination sampling*: Cases introduced by individual(s) who knew cases who were information rich.

2.   *Intensity sampling*: The selection of "information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensity."

3.   *Chain sampling*: The identification of cases by participants who knew what other cases were information-rich.

4.   *Stratified purposeful sampling*: Cases at different points of variation along the continuum (i.e., range of activism varied from signing a petition to giving speeches on human rights).

In addition to the above sampling procedures and based on the recommendations made by Hill and colleagues (1997) regarding criterion-based sampling, the following explanations and criteria for selection of participants were presented.

Iranians are a diverse group of people belonging to one of seven different ethnic enclaves; in addition, there are religious and political differences among the members of this population. Given these distinctions, individuals from various religious and political worldviews have comprised the imprisoned and tortured population in Iran. Based on ideological differences, the survivors' perception of the type of tortures (i.e., enduring flogging as punishment for refusal to pray) and therefore their subjective experience of such treatment is assumed to be different. Hence, the selection of participants for this study was based on specific criteria.

The participants in this study were comprised of Iranian survivors of political torture, who met the following criteria: (a) were from or had sympathy for the "Left Movement" in Iran, (b) sympathy for or organizational affiliation with the leftist group existed at least before, but could have lasted during and after the imprisonment, (c) served prison term(s) at some point between 1980 to 1995, (d) currently lived in exile, and (e) were individually or organizationally involved in some level of human rights activities.

Criteria A describes the "Left Movement" in Iran, which is comprised of individuals, groups, and organizations that believe in the Marxist-Leninist and the socialist ideology, and are nonreligious. Criteria B was set because while the current ideology of the participant in itself was not the point of concern for this investigation, the study was interested in exploring what had been involved in the process of change if in fact any change in one's ideology had taken place.

Criteria C was established because during the designated period the greatest crack down on political opposition groups took place and the largest number of political

activists, their families and acquaintances were imprisoned. The cut off of the year 1995 was set to include participants in the study that had some time lapse between the immediacy of their prison experience and participation in the study. Criteria D was set because living in exile introduces a different set of challenges (i.e., loss of support systems, learning a new life style, language, etc...), which may or may not strain one's ability to cope with the aftermath of trauma. In regard to criteria E, participants were deemed appropriate for this study if they were engaged in some level of activity relating to protection of human rights in Iran and/or worldwide.

Simon, Loewy, Sturmer, Weber, Fretag, Habig, Kampmeier, and Spahlinger (1998) state that members of disadvantaged groups who do not want to accept their circumstances find ways to improve their situation by adopting strategies that range from individual strategies of social mobility to collective strategies of social change. They further state that while individual strategies may involve leaving a disadvantaged group physically or at least psychologically, collective strategies may range from inter-group or collective action such as uprising and strikes, but also more moderate forms such as signing a petition or attending a group meeting.

The inclusion criteria was therefore set considering what Simon and colleagues (1998) offer in relation to various levels of participation in social movement. Accordingly, prospective participants who showed some level of involvement in the fight for the rights of others, ranging from signing a petition, attending a meeting, studying or working in a field related to the fight for human rights, organizing community movement through presentations, etc. were considered for inclusion in the study. Lastly, while the

criteria pertaining to ethnicity, age, and socio-economic status were considered and reflected in the analysis of the data, it did not influence the sample selection.

Participant Recruitment

A human rights activist who knew both the researcher and a group of survivors of torture from Iran nominated the initial potential participants, who met the criteria for inclusion. The nomination was on the grounds of the criteria set by the researcher, and the researcher's literature based explanations of trauma and resilience. Participants who were nominated were contacted first; the selected participants recommend others to be a part of this study. The number of participants was determined upon recognition by the researcher that sufficient data was collected displaying similar, shared, and repeated themes as narrated by the participants regarding their experiences and the construction of meaning in regard to their trauma, survival, and proactive fight for the rights of others. Therefore, based on the notion that in qualitative inquiry the number of participants providing information is unimportant relative to the richness of the data collected, sampling was concluded when the participants provided no new information, and a point of saturation was reached (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Hill and colleagues (1997) have suggested the use of between 8 to 15 participants, depending on the research questions. They have further asserted that using a larger sample is "unrealistic because of the time involved in examining each case and because additional cases typically add minimal new data" (p. 532). For the purpose of this study, inclusion of 6 to 9 participants was proposed. Ten potential participants were initially nominated for inclusion in the study. However, only 9 interviews were analyzed due to the fact that one of the nominated

potential participants did not meet criteria A, which was sympathy for or belonging to the Left Movement.

Contacting the Participants

An initial telephone contact was made to nominated participants at which time the purpose of the contact as well as that of the study, limits of confidentiality, and researcher's background were briefly explained and the nominated participants' interest in participating in the study was ascertained. These phone calls were placed immediately after the IRB approval was obtained and prior to the researcher's leaving the United States. Following this initial contact, and upon the agreement of the participants, an interview time was scheduled. Meanwhile, the researcher mailed, faxed, or e-mailed the Participant Informed Consent as shown in Appendix A, and a written statement further explaining the researcher's background and the purpose of the study as shown in Appendix B, to each and every participant. Persian translations of these forms, as respectively illustrated in Appendices E and F, were also provided for the participants along with the original forms written in English.

Protection of Participants

At the first meeting and before the interview was conducted, the researcher reviewed the Participant Informed Consent form with the participants. In addition, the researcher provided an opportunity for the participants to ask further questions regarding her background and the purpose of the investigation in order to fostering rapport and to

provide comfort and safety for participants whose sense of trust had been devastated by their experiences of torture and imprisonment.

The participants were informed that the study was conducted according to the ethical principles for research involving human participants (American Psychological Association, 1987), and that it had met the full approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Seton Hall University. Through the consent form, the participants were made aware that they were unrestricted in terms of their participation in the study and could withdraw at any time they decided to do so and for any reason. Furthermore, the participants were assured that their demographic data and the audiotapes of their interviews would be kept confidential in their entirety. They were informed that while their anonymity was to be safeguarded, the research team and possibly the researcher's committee members might read the transcripts. The participants were further notified that excerpts and themes from the data might be presented at conferences and appear in print. Some of the participants wished for their real names to be used in this study, indicating that they believed participation in this research was another step in documenting not only their personal ordeal, but also a part of history. Those who wished to remain anonymous were asked to choose a name to be used for them in the study.

The goal of this research was to gain insight into the experience of trauma and resilience as articulated by survivors of political torture from Iran. It was not used as an attempt to resolve any potential conflicts, which may exist for the participants. Since all survivors were asked to recall their own trauma narrative, it was assumed that the interviews might lead to topics resulting in the participants' experiencing possible discomfort. All participants were offered debriefing following the interview by the

researcher. The interviews were to be stopped and debriefing was to be provided if at any point the participant seemed in distress; however, in none of the interviews did this become necessary.

In the case of one of the participants, the interview could not be conducted on the scheduled day. While the participant met with the researcher and spoke to her for a number of hours, he did not feel comfortable speaking into the microphone and answering questions that day. He indicated that this was the first time he was talking to anyone about his prison experience in details. The participant was given the option to reschedule the interview, and the appointment was set for another day, at which time it was initiated and completed.

Participants were made aware of local community mental health facilities as well as the names of practicing psychologists as shown in Appendix G, and were supplied with the appropriate information when asked. Additionally, follow up contacts by the researcher were made to ensure the immediate wellness of the participants, in the following days and weeks after each initial interview. Lastly, the names and contact information of the researcher, the researcher's mentor as well as those of the director of Seton Hall University's Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects were provided to all participants, should they have any questions or concerns regarding this research or the researcher.

Data Collection

Four to seven-hour long, in-depth semi-structured interviews consisting of open-ended questions were utilized to record the personal narratives told by the ten participants

in this study. Prompts were used in the questioning to further facilitate process of narrative construction. The use of semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to ask questions in a systematic and consistent order while at the same time effort was made to conduct the interviews as collaborative conversations. Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate that the best way to begin an interview is to proceed with general questions and allow the participant to share his/her views openly; after rapport is established, the researcher can approach with reflection on issues.

A review of the literature as well as the personal experiences of the investigator with regard to political activism, repression, and living in exile informed the semi-structured interview questions. The interviews were structured to cover a number of basic themes, which were as follows: (a) family environment, (b) sociopolitical views, (c) trauma, resilience/coping, (d) belief systems, (e) exile experience, (f) support system, and (g) outlook for the future/hope. Table 1 entails examples of the questions.

The research design was emergent in nature allowing the researcher to make slight modifications in the interview protocol, as the study progressed, based on the themes that emerged from the interviews and were not included in the existing structure. Appendix C contains the original set of interview questions. To prepare for the interview process, this researcher simulated an interview with a research assistant to examine the flow and the timing of the questions.

In addition to the data collected from the interviews, important elements from the researcher's reflexive journal, as called by Lincoln and Guba (1985), provided supplementary information, which although not a part of the analysis was included in the result section of the study. The reflexive journal embodied the researcher's reflections,

observations and interpretations regarding her encounters with the participants, and it was reviewed by the study's auditor. .

Setting

Data collection took place in Germany where laws pertaining to immigrants and refugees had made it possible for a considerable number of Iranian political refugees to resettle in that country. To protect the sense of safety and security and for the convenience of the participants, all interviews were conducted in places designated by them, which for seven of the participants meant their residences, and for the other two it meant the researcher's temporary residence. Privacy and safety were the only criteria in this regard. The researcher covered personal traveling expenses required to meet those participants who lived in other cities, but the participants coming to meet the researcher did not accept assistance in this regard.

Narrative Analysis

Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992, as cited in Riessman, 1993) state that in narrative analysis it is the story itself that is the object of investigation. Riessman (1993) holds that "narrative analysis allows for systematic study of personal experience and meaning." Narrative analysis delineates the ways in which experience is told, and not just the content to which language refers. "The story metaphor emphasizes that we create order, construct texts in particular contexts" (Riessman, 1993, p. 1). The purpose of analysis is therefore paying attention to how the informants organize the stream of their experiences

Table 1

Interview Questions

Family Environment	*Support System*
Tell me about your family (parents, siblings, class, ethnicity, education, extended family). How would you describe your parents' style of child rearing and their treatment of you specifically? If your family had a motto, what would it be? What messages did you hear within your family when growing up?	What kind of support systems (imagined or real) did you have during your imprisonment? What type of support system have you had since your release from prison? What kind of support system do you have now while in exile?
Sociopolitical Views	*Coping/Resilience*
When and how did you become aware of sociopolitical problems in Iran (What specific event(s)/people were influential in this process)? What were your values, political convictions and your social views at that time? What are your values, political convictions and your social views at this time? How are these affected by your experience of torture?	Looking back at your life, what do you think has helped you maintain hope while imprisoned, and in the aftermath of your experience of torture? What do you think your survival in the midst of political violence in Iran means? Given your experience of torture and imprisonment, what do your current state of activities, as related to creating change in the human rights condition in Iran, mean to you? What is you outlook for the future?

	Exile Experience
Trauma Talk about your prison experience (arrest [how & when], torture, trial, years in prison, relationships (positive/negative), release, other information may want to share). How would you describe the effects of torture on your overall life (emotional, social, relational, and physical)?	*Exile Experience* Tell me about your life in exile: Opportunities, hardships, friendships, work, school, language, family, prejudice, etc…
Turning Points Tell me about yourself: If you were to think that your life was a book, how many chapters would it have, what would you name each one, and what would be an overview of each chapter? Tell me about your life at the threshold of 1979 Revolution (age, occupation etc.) Tell me about your life from 1979 to the year of your arrest. Is there anything else you would like to share about being a survivor of torture who continues the fight for the rights of others? Do you have any questions for me?	

to make sense of what has happened in their lives. The aim of analysis is to look at the process of becoming and not just what the participants have become.

Bruner (1990, as cited in Riessman, 1993) states that narrative analysis has to do with how the "main characters" interpret things, what the human instrument decides to include in the story, how the events are told and what they mean. The task of narrative analysis therefore is to systematically interpreting their interpretations and to ask why was the story told by the narrator in that way.

This study utilized the constant comparative method of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which is the simultaneous collection and analysis of the data. In addition, the two methods of narrative analysis, categorical-content and holistic-form modes (Lieblich, et al., 1998) were used in analysis of the data.

Categorical-Content Mode of Analysis

The audiotape interview of each participant was transcribed verbatim, and each text was broken down into units of analysis and summarized into categories (Lieblich et al., 1998). Two major constructs of resilience and trauma were considered. Sentences or paragraphs that were believed to fall under the concept of trauma were highlighted in yellow, and those believed to portray the concept of resilience were highlighted in green. Each sentence or paragraph was further coded according to the specific theme it depicted. During the process of data analysis, categories remained flexible and open to redefinition as more units were analyzed. The units of analysis were compared in search of commonalties between meanings and themes for each text of each participant and between the transcribed interviews of all the participants. The commonalties were put

into subcategories, and ultimately, paramount higher order categories were conceptualized. In order to maintain objectivity, during the process of analysis, all coding done by the primary researcher was checked against that of what was done by the second coder and the auditor, who coded and reviewed the transcripts simultaneously. Five of the nine transcripts were translated fully from English into Persian by the researcher; however, only portions of the remaining four interviews were translated that were to be included in the final result section. The full translations were conducted to provide accessibility of the data for the English-speaking members of the dissertation committee. Due to the tremendous amount of work involved in translating all interviews, as well as the time limits concerning the completion of this dissertation, not all interviews were translated.

Holistic- Form Mode of Analysis

The objective in this approach was to drawing out a prototypical life course for the participants. This mode of analysis was chosen because the study was concerned with the process and the meaning of events in the context within which they occurred as opposed to the mere occurrences of those events. By taking the holistic view, the researcher had the opportunity to interpret the participants' life events in the context of the other parts of the narrative. Form refers to the structure of the plot in terms of how the narrator sequences the events (i.e., ascend toward the present or descend toward it from more positive periods), the feeling evolved by the story, the style of the narrative (i.e., pessimistic, optimistic, or both), and the choices of metaphors or words (i.e., passive, active). In this mode of analysis, the researcher used the complete narrative to see how it

developed. This meant that the researcher searched for a climax, or a turning point in the story, which shed light on the entire development, clarifying what events, people or influences have directly affected or indirectly played a part in the process of change in the narrator's life. Two separate phases comprised this mode of analysis.

In the first phase, the researcher was interested in the specific form and direction taken by the content. Therefore, topics such as coping or social support might have been the thematic foci of the narrative, but the researcher made an effort to understand the process of this development rather than the content. The second phase of analysis was to identify the dynamics of the story line, which the narrator might have indirectly alluded to by using a particular form of speech such as evaluative comments that might have referred to one's entire life (i.e., 'my life was a Cinderella story'), or by direct responses to questions that tended to elicit references to a turning point in the life of the narrator (i.e., What were you doing at the outset of 1979 Revolution?).

Criteria for Evaluation of Results

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the degree to which results of a study can be trusted. This construct is compatible with reliability in quantitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have proposed the assessment of trustworthiness of qualitative data through the examination of its four components, which are comprised of the following: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) conformability. Further explanation and clarification of each of the four components of trustworthiness will be discussed.

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is subject-oriented, not defined a priori by the researcher (Sandelowski, 1986, as cited in Krefting, 1991). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility poses the question of whether the investigator has established confidence in the truth of the findings based on the research design, participants, and the context in which the study was conducted. A number of researchers have suggested various strategies for ensuring the credibility of qualitative research (Guba, 1981; Krefting, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study used the following strategies in order to add to credibility of the results: (a) prolonged engagement, (b) reflexive journal, (c) triangulation, (d) peer debriefing, and (e) testimonial validity.

Prolonged engagement. Krefting (1991) states that in order to establish credibility, the researcher needs to immerse in the research setting for an adequate amount of time to be able to identify and verify recurring patterns. Lincoln and Guba (1985) termed this strategy, prolonged engagement. Prolonged engagement enables the researcher to check perspectives, and allows the participant to become accustomed to and comfortable with the researcher.

In the process of this study, prolonged engagement, in addition to the researcher's three-month stay in Germany, was maintained via multiple contacts with the participants, which took place in the following ways: (a) the initial telephone call, (b) the phone contact scheduling the interview, (c) the in-depth interview, (d) the follow-up contacts to inquire about the well-being of the participant after the interview has taken place, and finally, (e) contact for the participants' review of the transcripts.

Krefting (1991) offers a word of caution regarding prolonged engagement. He holds that while persistent observation of the phenomenon under investigation can aid the researcher in identifying response sets and "participants' consistent patterns of either agreement or disagreement with the questions," it may pose a paradoxical issue that can threaten the credibility of the study. He suggests that this threat is related to the closeness of the investigator and the participants that may occur during the prolonged contact, and suggests that reflexivity can be used to guard against this "over-involvement."

Reflexive journal. One way to help ensure that "extreme over-involvement" with the participants' worlds does not occur, and the researcher can maintain objectivity through the process of research is by keeping a reflexive journal (Good, Herrera, Good, & Cooper, 1985, as cited in Krefting, 1991). Reflexivity is referred to being conscious of oneself as one sees oneself. It is a socially constructed process of self bending back on one's experiences (Mead, 1962, as cited in Steier, 1991) through which self may become different as a result of its self-pointing (Steier, 1991).

In other words, reflexivity refers to the assessment of the influence of the investigator's own background, perceptions, and interests on the qualitative research process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the reflexive journal as a kind of diary in which the investigator records a variety of information about self and method of investigation, either on a daily basis or as needed.

To maintain progressive subjectivity in the process of the study, a field journal was kept during all phases of the research, recording observations, insights, and possible

themes as they were emerging. Reflections and impressions of the participants as well as reactions to the process of research were documented.

Triangulation. Triangulation refers to the cross-checking of data through the use of multiple procedures or sources, where corroboration is achieved when the multiple sources are in agreement (Johnson, 1997). Triangulation is a powerful strategy for enhancing the quality and the rigor of the research, particularly its credibility (Krefting, 1991). By providing different piece of data, or introducing diverse viewpoints in the process of analysis, triangulation can minimize distortions that may arise from a single source of data or a biased researcher.

While there are various types of triangulation, this study utilized triangulation of investigators, which is the use of multiple investigators in interpretation of the data. In this study, data collection was conducted entirely by the researcher; however, the assistance of a coder and an inquiry audit were sought in the phase of data analysis. In accordance with the consensual method of analysis in qualitative research, the researcher, the coder, and the auditor analyzed the transcriptions simultaneously (Hill et al., 1997). Influenced by this method, only those themes that were agreed upon by the researcher, the coder, and the auditor, were included in the final findings. It is noteworthy to state that all the research assistants in this study were trained regarding the issues of concern to the Seton Hall University, Institutional Review Board especially issues regarding confidentiality and anonymity. Other details regarding the members of the research team and their roles are presented.

Since the interviews were conducted in the native language of the survivors (Persian) and the results were to be presented in English, it was important for the primary team members who would view and analyze the data to be fluent in both languages. In accordance with this essentiality, the researcher, second coder, and the inquiry audit were all fluent in Persian and English languages.

The first research assistant was Dr. Keivandokht Nikfar, an Iranian expert in the field of Middle-Eastern studies, who received her doctorate from Cologne University in Germany where she has resided for years. Dr. Nikfar's role was defined as the second coder. She read the entire transcript after each interview was completed and transcribed in its entirety, by the researcher. Thereafter, the researcher and Dr. Nikfar discussed each emerging theme and category until consensus was made regarding the identification of each. Dr. Nikfar's role was to keep the biases of the researcher in check by confirming, refuting, or offering revisions for the identified emerging themes and categories.

In addition to the second coder and to examine the credibility and dependability of the investigation, this study used an inquiry audit as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1995). An auditor is a researcher who reviews both the processes of the inquiry and the results, which may include material such as researcher's written records, field notes, transcripts, and the analysis of the data. This study was audited by Ms. Mahdeiran Namin, an Iranian woman with a degree in Cross-cultural Relations and Immigration Issues from Stockholm University, Sweden. She currently resides in the United States. Ms. Namin engaged in the coding process as well as reviewing the final analysis of the data.

Peer debriefing. Lincoln & Guba (1985) have asserted that the task of a peer debriefer is to serve as an impartial person, who in a "manner paralleling an analytic session" will facilitate the process of bringing to the surface that which might otherwise remain unsaid in the researcher's mind. Through this process, which contributes to the credibility of the research, the researcher is probed to clarify her interpretations and face her biases. For the duration of this investigation, Dr. Anne Farrar's assistance was sought as a peer debriefer. She aided the researcher in remaining objective and honest in regard to her observations and viewpoints. Dr. Farrar is a Caucasian female, and a recent graduate of the counseling psychology doctoral program at Seton Hall University. She had neither professional nor personal connections to the phenomenon under study.

Testimonial validity. Stiles (1993, as cited in Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997), and Lincoln and Guba (1985) have emphasized the importance of member checking, which is having the participants review the researcher's data, interpretations, categories, and conclusions. This technique, which is called testimonial validity by Stiles (1993 as cited in Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997) is a way to assess whether the data make sense and is used to decrease the chances of misinterpretation on the part of the researcher. For the purpose of this investigation, the participants were given the option of reviewing the transcript of their interview. All participants asked for a copy of their interview, and the researcher provided a copy of the transcript for each participant in order to elicit their feedback. None of the participants provided feedback. Only one participant requested to see the quotes chosen by the researcher to include in the dissertation's result section.

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative inquiry has been compared to external validity in quantitative research. It implies the ability to generalize the findings of the study. "Generalizability is not seen as relevant to qualitative research because its purpose is to describe a particular phenomenon or experience not to generalize to others" (Krefting, 1991). Lincoln and Guba (1995) have also asserted that it is neither the task nor the aim of the qualitative researcher to provide transferability or generalizability of the research findings. To address the issue of generalizability, Lincoln and Guba have further maintained, the responsibility of the researcher is rather to provide adequate descriptive data to allow comparison.

Dependability

Concept of dependability as explained by Guba (1981, as cited in Krefting, 1991) implies *trackable variability*, which is explained in terms of *sources of variability* (i.e., increase of insight on the part of the researcher) that might effect the data analysis and therefore findings of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have asserted that researchers should account for and acknowledge their personal influence as well as those of situational factors' on the research process. To assess dependability in qualitative research, Hill and colleagues (1997) have suggested that researchers need to report enough details in the write-up of their study so that others can evaluate what happened in the research process. Dependability of this study was ensured through the use of a second coder and an inquiry audit in the phase of data analysis formerly described. Similarly, data from the researcher's reflexive journal would add to the dependability of the study.

Confirmability

Guba (1981, as cited in Krefting, 1991) has defined confirmability as objectivity. It seeks to determine that the study is both reliable and valid and that it is not based on subjective reactions. The use of inquiry audit has been described as the main technique for establishing confirmability (Krefting, 1991). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the auditors will not only consider the product, data, interpretations, and recommendations of the research, but they will take in to account the process of investigation when auditing the study. As indicated previously, in this study, an auditor reviewed researcher's entire recorded material.

Researcher's Point of View

This researcher's values, interests, and close relationship to the subject matter of this research were the sources of motivation for conducting the present study. Therefore, the study began with the acknowledgement that all scientific investigation begins with the observer's biased curiosity, and with the recognition that this researcher also has had a "legitimate interest" in the outcome of this study. While this interest was not about which direction the outcome would take, it stemmed from and was inspired by the concerns of the researcher's own experience. Hence, the researcher's interpretation of the interpretations offered by the participants was inevitably influenced by the context within which her own experiences were shaped.

The researcher further acknowledges that while the participants were drawing the interpretation of their life events from the Iranian context, they fashioned the events they narrated in response to the researcher's cues. In narrating their stories, the reciprocal

action of telling and listening took place, and the researcher and the participant produced a narrative together. Furthermore, the researcher's stand was influenced by that of Riessman's (1993), therefore being cognizant of the fact that the participants did not simply tell stories, but they created a self, which was how they wanted to be known by this researcher.

During the period in which this dissertation proposal was actualized and the interviews for this study were conducted, I was a 36-year-old, 3rd year counseling psychology doctoral student. Born and raised in Iran, I came to the United States in 1983. Previous to my abrupt, involuntary departure from my homeland, I was a political activist, and experienced oppression on multiple levels. Presently, I have been living in exile for the past 20 years turning my adversity into a social commitment to take action in regards to the rights of those whose voices cannot be heard, and a professional commitment for advocacy, education, and treatment of victims of social and political violence.

More specifically, in the period during which I have lived in exile, I have familiarized myself intimately with the issues of human rights abuses such as use of torture with political prisoners in Iran. While my interests were initially embedded within a nationalistic boundary, they have gradually developed, moving into a broader international context. Equipped with psychological training in research and practice, I hope to use my acquired knowledge in the service of abolishing the abuses of human rights worldwide through contributions to upholding, research, and treatment of survivors of crimes against humanity. Conducting this study therefore became a first step for me in

fulfilling this commitment to bring knowledge about the unspoken and the unknown to surface and to mobilize social discourse.

CHAPTER IV

Iranian Context

In this chapter, I present the reader with the historical, political, and cultural

dimensions, which encircle the life stories narrated by the participants in the study and

establish a base for understanding the plight of these individuals. This is done with the

hope of assisting the Western reader in gaining knowledge about the Iranian context, the

attributes of the ruling authority, and the pervasive and continual nature of politically

based trauma as experienced by the participants.

The Historical Background

Iran has historically been considered one of the most important countries in the

Middle East owed to its richness in oil and its geographical closeness to Russia, India,

Turkey, and the Arab world. These seemingly advantageous inherent characteristics have

created multiple hindrances for the Iranians' endeavors in establishing a democratic

governing system and in their struggle for freedom, independence, and justice.

A number of formative events have marked the recent political memory of Iran,

and pursuant to freedom from foreign influences and establishment of democratic rights,

each of these occurrences has met with set backs, leaving legacies of disillusionment and

distrust for the masses. The significance of such historical predicaments is realized as the

participants in this study narrate how their families transfer feelings of defeat and cynicism to the younger generation regarding the struggle for freedom in that country.

The participants' accounts entail references to the following historical events: The Constitutional Revolution of 1905, the Nationalization of the Oil Industry of 1951 and the subsequent military coup of 1953, the White Revolution and descent of Khomeini into exile in 1963, and the Revolution of 1979, the event that brought about the new face of political repression in Iran. In addition to briefly explicating these historical circumstances, I will present an overview of the disposition of political organizations to which the participants belonged at the time of their arrest, organizations that took part in the uprising of 1978-1979 and later became the objects of an onslaught by the post-revolution's despotic regime.

The writings of Abrahamian (1983, 1999), Afshari (2001), Bamdad (2001), Gasiorowski (1993), Graham (1980), Katouzian (1998), Keddie (1998), and Tabari (1983), have aided me in my conceptualization and presentation of Iranian context as related to this study. These authors have presented more in-depth examinations of the modern history of Iran, each offering a distinctive view on the formative events in the memory of this country.

Events from 1905 – 1990

The Constitutional Revolution

The Constitutional Revolution of 1905 was an uprising against the dictatorship of the Qajar dynasty. A coalition of merchants, artisans, and clergy led the protest. The revolution was prompted by increased taxes proposed by the Shah's Belgian advisor,

Joseph Naus, and a general hostility to the growing foreign intrusion in Iran and was sparked by the physical punishment of merchants in Tehran for price violations in December of 1905.

While initially the protestors made vague demands for just rule, ideas of constitutional reform advocated by westernized intellectuals circulated among the dissatisfied masses and shaped their demands, and a second antigovernment demonstration in July 1906 articulated a clear call for a constituent assembly. The assembly consisting of artisans, merchants, clergy, and bureaucrats convened in October 1906 and drew up a constitution based on the Belgian constitution of 1831. The constitution subordinated the shah to parliamentary government while maintaining Islam as Iran's official religion.

Muhammad Ali Shah of the Qajar Dynasty, forced by the government's weakness, endorsed the constitution and accepted its demands by August 5, 1906 while at the same time plotting to overturn it. Kept on the throne by the royal guard of the Persian Cossack Brigade, the Shah, who was considered a Russian puppet, opposed the Parliament and received support from conservative Shiia members of the clergy, who had never accepted the Constitution, believing that the reformists of the Constitutional Revolution should not have modeled Iranian government after imported Western-style systems. The Shah's coup d'etat against the Parliament ultimately led to further civil unrest and, finally, his deposition. The Constitution of 1906 underwent a number of amendments, but remained the official constitution of Iran until the Revolution of 1979.

The Pahlavi Dynasty

The Qajar Dynasty was unable to adjust itself to the demands of the Constitutional Revolution. Its opposition to the revolution and the Constitution added to people's hatred for this dynasty, and following a series of bloody events, resulted in its oust. The overthrow of the Qajars was at first with the hope of putting the constitution fully in force. In the stormy last days of the Qajar period, a colonel in the Cossack Division named Reza Khan, claiming restoration of safety and security, took over power in 1921. Iranians, who had become tired of living in the midst of crisis and lack of safety, believed his promises. Reza Khan gradually gained more power, and by using intimidation and threats, and giving false promises, was able to turn the end of Qajar's into the beginning of his own dynasty, which later was inherited by his son. "Whereas the revolution of 1905-1909 had replaced the Qajar despotism with a liberal constitution, the coup d'etat of 1921 was to clear the way for the demolition of the parliamentary structures and the establishment of the Pahlavi autocracy" (Abrahamian, 1983, p. 103).

The era of Pahlavi Dynasty was the era of transition of Iranian society from traditionalism to modernization. However, while to the eyes of the foreign spectators Iran was pushing fast forward toward modernization, this transformation was not done evenly, in depth, and thoughtfully: The cities became larger, but at the cost of villages becoming ruined. The industry and service sectors grew, but the agriculture fell behind; the society became modern in terms of some aspects of the culture without having a chance to critically examine the traditions. While Tehran and a number of other cities expanded, other areas of the country kept their traditional and backward structures. During this

period, the urban middle class and the industrial workers grew; however they were deprived from political participation (Abrahamian, 1983, p. 427; Gasiorowski, 1993, p. 312).

According to Abrahamian (1983) and Graham (1980), all through, the power was concentrated in the hands of the government, bureaucracy amplified, and corruption flooded the governmental agencies. Nothing would get done without the permission from the Shah himself, and while a large fraction of the population remained poor and deprived, power and wealth resided in the hands of a selected few, most of whom had close ties with the Pahlavi Dynasty. People would look for the roots of all their problems in the government and the Imperial court. Both of the Shahs of Pahlavi thought that by oppressing the discontented, the discontent would disappear.

In 1941, Mohammad Reza Shah had become the new ruler of Iran, after the allied British and Russians had deposed his father, Reza Shah, a friend of the Germans, who had refused to lend Iran to their wartime needs. Iranians supported Reza Shah's overthrow and were relieved by his oust.

Mohammad Reza promised to remain loyal to the Constitution, and as long as he had not possessed absolute power, it was possible to enforce the Constitutional laws. This period, however, only lasted until the Coup d'état of 1953. It was only during this time, over the course of Pahlavi ruling, when Iranians were able to taste the freedom for which they had fought for generations. The salience of this period was in the growth of political parties, freedom of press, and the advancement of people's political awareness. It was also during this era that the modern intelligentsia entered the political scene as a prominent force. Three main political forces in Iran during this time were the nationalists

with Mossadegh as the representative of the liberal faction and the National Front as their confederation, the socialists with the Tudeh Party[1], which was a follower of Soviet Communists, as its main force, and the Islamists under the leadership of Ayatollah Kashani (Abrahamian, 1983, pp. 250-260).

The Nationalization of Oil Industry and the 1953 Coup d'état

Muhammad Mossadegh, who believed in the establishment of a completely independent and democratic government in Iran, was elected prime minister in 1951. Prior to this time, he had played a key role in preventing the Soviet Union from taking over the oil industry in the Northern region of the country. Mossadegh and his colleagues believed that as long as a foreign company had control over the country's most important and most modern industry, which practically meant control over an entire province, and interfered in the politics of the country in order to maintain its interests, establishment of a democratic regime would not be possible (Katouzian, 2002).

Mossadegh proposed the nationalization of oil industry in opposition to the British Oil Company's contract, and after he was appointed prime minister by the Parliament, he passed this bill. Passing of the bill for the nationalization of oil industry prompted important international oil companies, whose interests in the Persian Gulf were protected by the British army, to boycott the buy of Iranian oil, thereby putting tremendous pressure on Iran's already fragile economy. The British politicians, unhappy with Mossadegh from the beginning, were making attempts at overthrowing his

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[1] Tudeh Party (The Party of the Iranian Masses) had emerged immediately after the abdication of Reza Shah and the release of the 53 Marxists imprisoned in 1937, twenty-seven of which had announced the formation of a political organization.

administration by setting in motion Mossadegh's conservative opponents in the Parliament.

By August 1953, the underlying contradictions between the traditional and the modern middle class, which had initially supported Mossadegh, had surfaced. Mossadegh, by siding with the latter, had lost the support of groups representing the traditional middle class. The conservative religious leadership and activists within the national movement, who were more interested in the establishment of an Islamic government, began to openly oppose Mossadegh and his administration, and receiving constant support from England and the United States, this right wing opposition aimed at overthrowing Mossadegh (Abrahamian, 1983, p. 278).

At the same time, a committee of discontented royalist officers, was secretly planning a military coup d'état and established contact with the British secret service. The new administration in Washington, headed by General Eisenhower sent Kermit Roosevelt of the Central Intelligence Agency to Tehran to finance a military coup. The rebellious tribes were supplied with weapons, and conservative clerics were contacted. In order to damage the reputation of the Tudeh Party, "thugs were hired to vandalize mosques while carrying the Party's banners" (Abrahaminan, 1983). The main officer supporting Mossadegh was assassinated and his mutilated body was left outside Tehran. Mossadegh, who was "the first prime minister ever to publicly criticize the Shah for violating the constitution and to accuse the courts of standing in the way of the national struggle" (Abrahaminan, 1983, p. 271) along with his supporters were arrested. The armed forces dismantled the National Front as well as the Tudeh Party, and finally, the

Shah, who had left the country at the advice of the financiers of the coup d'etat, returned home.

"The 1953 coup brought down an iron curtain on Iranian politics. It cut the opposition leaders from their followers, the militants from the general public, and the political parties from their social bases.... For the next twenty-four years, with the brief exception of 1960-1963, the country was to follow a quiet course" in politics (Abrahamian, 1983, p. 450).

The Shah's Revolution and the New Period of Clergies' Dissension

After the Coup d'état of 1953, the Shah relied on the United States for maintaining the stability of his regime and running the internal affairs of the country. With the help of the United States, the Shah ended a Western-style parliamentary democracy (Graham, 1980, p. 71) and quickly moved toward establishing an absolutist monarchy (Gasiorowski, 1993, p. 151). In order to make this happen, he began to implement a number of reforms, calling them the "Shah-People Revolution" or the "White Revolution." He claimed that it was "white" because it had been implemented from the higher up, indicating his belief that "strong authoritarian rule is essential" (Graham, 1980, p. 71). These reforms were ordered by the Kennedy administration with the intention of Iran becoming a stabilized, powerful country capable of protecting the United State's interests and obstructing the penetration of Soviet Union in the Middle East (Abrahamian, 1983, p. 422).

The six main principles of this revolution were announced in 1962 with amendments added later on. The most important principle of the White Revolution was

land reform. Land was purchased from the khans[2], and was sold to farmers for small installments. The Shah had hoped that following these acts, the old feudalists would turn into new capitalists and their assets would be invested in the industry. He thought that through this reform, every one would be satisfied, both the farmers and the khans, and the society would move toward modernization.

Another important principle of the White Revolution was the women's right to vote. The women's demands for the right to vote had increased since the 1950s when Mossadegh's administration was in power and Iran was enjoying a short period of political freedom. The Shah, however, had been uncertain about granting women this right because of the opposition from the religious leaders, who believed women's right to vote was against the Islamic laws. The Shah's hesitation was also due to his own wish to oversee the political activities of the women directly. Due to the pressures from the women's movement, and the Shah's desire to portray Iran as a modern society, the Shah decided to pass the law for the emancipation of women (Paidar, 1995, pp. 140-147).

Eventually, "a series of developments, which resulted in violent suppression of the opposition, led to women's enfranchisement" (Paidar, 1995, p. 140). The Shah created the High Council of Women's Organization of Iran to facilitate women's participation in politics; the catch was that this participation was under the supervision of the royal family. Nevertheless, women had finally been granted the right to vote (Paidar, 1995, pp. 140-147).

One of the other important principles of the Shah's revolution, in addition to emancipation of women and land reform, was the establishment of the Knowledge Corps.

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[2] Land owners, who in many instances had possession of several villages at one time. Also, meaning Sir, Boss.

Based on this article, in lieu of enlisting in the army after graduation from high school or university, after completion of a training period, the graduates would be sent to villages to serve as teachers for a specified duration. The anticipated implication was an increase in the percentage of literacy in the country.

The face of Iran was changing gradually, but not in the fashion the Shah had imagined. The face of villages changed. Yesterday's self-sufficient villages turned into rural communities that had to rely on the cities in order to obtain even their most basic provisions for survival. The farmers, who had purchased small lands, courtesy of the land reform, unable to feed their families by depending on farming, migrated to the big cities. Only a small number of these newly migrated farmers would be observed into the labor force as construction or factory workers, the rest would comprise the masses that filled the slums, becoming the urbane with the village mentality. The urbane, who did not have a place in the cities and whose residences in the outskirts of the cities remained deprived of the privileges of urban life. These people were the main forces that later became the prime supporters of Khomeini and played an important role in the Revolution of 1979 (Graham, 1980, p. 223).

Historically, despite the role the religious leadership had played in mobilizing the masses against foreign forces, a division of the clergy had never accepted the Constitution and had instead favored the establishment of a theocratic government. This split within the religious community had not been properly resolved, and had been rather muffled when Reza Shah established his Pahlavi Dynasty in 1926. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, as Iran was rapidly moving toward Western-style modernization under the

Pahlavi's rule, the discontent of the clergy had began to surface when a young clergyman, Ruhollah Khomeini, began to attack the regime of Pahlavi (Graham, 1980, p. 219).

Khomeini had come from a family of well-known religious figures, attracting a devoted following among seminary students before he was 30 years old. Like several other of the clergy, suspicious of Mossadegh's ties with the Tudeh Party, Khomeini had kept his distance from the National Front during the 1951 oil nationalization, and "advised the faithful to keep out of politics, which, in practice, meant staying aloof both from the oil campaign and from the struggle to limit royal power" (Abrahamian, 1999, p. 75).

The overthrow of Mossadegh and dismantling of political leadership left Khomeini as one of the leading opposition figures, and by 1962, he established himself as a formidable presence as well as one of Iran's leading religious leaders among some (Graham, 1980, p. 220). Khomeini was the representative of the clergy who opposed the Shah's reforms. The clergy showed severe reactions to two of the articles of the Shah's reforms, one of which was the land reform, and the other was women's right to vote.

The clergy's opposition to land reform had two reasons: The religious leadership traditionally had close ties with the Bazar bourgeoisie and the Feudalists, and its livelihood was secured through maintenance of these ties. They also had a religious reason for their opposition to land reform: based on Islamic laws, no one has the right to take the land away from its owner and sell it to another.

The opposition to women's right to vote had preceding roots. Reza Shah had began to culturally emphasize the nationalism that admired pre-Islamic Iran, taking the powers of judicial and educational controls away from the clergy; in addition, Reza Shah

had opposed hijab[3], forcing women to unveil in 1936. This had extremely infuriated the religious leadership. In general, the clergy believed that the women's entrance into society meant increase in corruption and immorality. They had recognized that modernization of society meant distancing from the traditional religious world, which meant the weakening of the clergy. They had realized that one of the indicators of modernization was the emancipation of women. (Graham, 1980, p. 220; Tabari, 1983, p. 61)

Khomeini linked the opposition in this new circumstance to the traditional political struggle of the religious leadership[4]. After the White Revolution, the clergy did not oppose the modernization of the country directly; instead, they voiced their opposition toward the Westernization of the country and the Shah's dependence on the United States, hence demonstrating their political flair (Abrahamian, 1983, p. 425). By attacking the Shah after his reforms, Khomeini was able to introduce slogans, which were not only appealing to the Islamists, but also attracted the nationalists. Following his opposition to the Shah's reforms, Khomeini was arrested in June 1963. Riots, which had begun after his arrest, continued to be commemorated by him even after he was forced to reside in Iraq in late 1964. Khomeini continued to voice his opposition to the Pahlavi Dynasty from overseas (Graham, 1980, p. 220).

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[3] Veil; to wear a veil.

[4] Historically, the religious leadership had demonstrated significant powers of persuasion and popular mobilization. For example, the clergy had been able to mobilize the masses to protest against a tobacco concession granted in 1891 to the British by urging people not to smoke. A fraction of the religious leadership had also been in the forefront in backing the constitutional movement of 1905 (Graham, 1980).

Struggle Against the Dictatorship of the Shah

Following the CIA-organized Coup of 1953, the Shah had become increasingly autocratic. Oppression raged in stifling dimensions, and except for a short interlude at the beginning of the 1960s, it consistently gained momentum. By the mid 1970s, the Shah's extensive army was equipped with the most modern weapons and its power seemed capable of trampling any "rebellions as far away as Oman" (Abrahamian, 1983, p. 496). Iran, acting as the watchdog of the region, protected the interests of the West, especially the United States, and its location on the northern side of the Middle East made its alliance vital for the United States, in case of the need for ground or air attacks against the Soviet Union (Gasiorowski, 1993, p. 165).

Internally, social control and thus the stability of the regime were maintained through the operation of an adept secret police called SAVAK, which spied on students, censored books, magazines, and newspapers, and silenced all forms of free expression. In addition, bypassing a debating forum, the Shah had created a one party system as a mean of political control. He had ignored the Constitution, creating a government, which was a dictatorship disguised as monarchy (Graham, 1980, p. 136).

Suppression of the Marxists, the intellectuals, and the Islamists, especially after 1963, pushed the younger generation toward armed struggle. In the 1960s, a small group of Iranians, essentially drawn from student milieu and inspired by the armed liberation movement around the world, began training with the intention of underground guerilla operations aimed at overthrowing the corrupt Pahlavi Dynasty. While a fraction of these individuals believed in the Marxist tradition and was mainly influenced and inspired by the armed struggle in Latin America as well as the achievements of leaders such as Fidel

Castro in Cuba, the other group, mainly comprised of college students and other individuals from religious intellectual circles, was inspired by the struggle of people of Palestine and Algeria for liberation and justice. The former called themselves People's Fadayi Organization (Fadayian), and the latter People's Mojahedin Organization (Mojahedin).[5]

Whereas the older political generation in Iran such as the Tudeh Party and the National Front Organization had given priority to political struggle through formation of political parties, trade unions, and parliamentary strategies, the new generation felt these strategies had reached a dead end and the only way forward was through armed struggle, guerrilla warfare, heroic martyrdom, and inspiration to self-sacrifice. One of the most historically significant operations carried out by the Fadayian was the 1971 take over of the gendarmerie station in Siahkal in a Northern Province of Iran (Graham, 1980, p. 216). By the 1970s both guerilla groups had became the new generation's folk heroes. Between mid 1960s and early 1970s, many of the committee members of both organizations were arrested and some were executed[6] (Abrahamian, 1983, p. 480).

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[5] The term fadayi means devotee. It is derived from the word fada meaning sacrifice and devotion. The term mojahed means solider of the holy war. It comes from the word jihad meaning holy war.

[6] While in prison, the Mojahedin organization was split into two fractions of right and left. The left fraction later became the Paykar (Struggle) Organization. After the revolution, The Fadayi Organization was divided into two fractions called the Fadayi Majority Organization, which later created close ties with the Tudeh Party and supported the Islamic Republic, and the Fadayi Minority Organization, which outright opposed the new government and set to overthrow it along with the main opposition group, the Mojahedin. The Fadayi organization was further split into three additional small fractions: The Left Wing, the Followers of 16th Azar Congress (Keshtgar), and the People's Fadayi Guerrilla Organization, each differing in their views regarding the government of Iran, tactics of struggle, and the allies of Iranian Revolution.

Revolution of 1979

The Pahlavi Dynasty remained in power for 50 years, during which time Iran saw both modernization and despotism. According to Abrahamian (1983), two major crises in the 1970s led to the eventual fall of the Pahlavi regime. One was an economic crisis caused by acute inflation, which raised the cost-of-living index from 100 in 1970 to 190 in 1976, and the other was an institutional crisis, which resulted from international pressures on the Shah regarding police controls and observance of the human rights of political dissenters (p. 497).

The opposition to the Shah and his policies had grown over the years. By 1977, protests against the political process of the regime were vocalized by three members of the National Front Organization. Soon after, poetry readings staged at the Irano-German Institute (the Goethe Institute) attracted a discontented crowd of over 10,000 (Graham, 1980, p. 210). These events set in motion a snowball effect, prompting the sense of frustration and anger at the regime's inability to change its ways to break out across the country in various forms of protest. Women played a big role in these campaigns and appeared in large numbers in the mourning processions for those killed, which soon were transformed into political demonstrations. The guerrilla organizations (Fadayian and Mojahedin) had joined the masses and had gained a large following due to their merits.

"At the onset of 1978 Khomeini was still a voice crying in the wilderness, severely constrained by his relations with Iraqi Government, which was anxious not to offend the Shah" (Graham, 1980, p. 229). With the support of other opposition, especially the National Front Organization, Khomeini began sending messages to the people of Iran from his new residence in France. While the moderate clergy within Iran

was not looking to overthrow the Shah, Khomeini's uncompromising position turned the table against the Pahlavi regime, and during a demonstration in December of 1978 Khomeini's leadership was endorsed by the masses, and a resolution called upon the people to continue their struggle until the overthrow of the Shah (Graham, 1980, p. 238). In January 1979, Khomeini returned to Iran after 14 years in exile and took over by February. With the shift in power, thousands of groups sprang up in the name of the Revolution. SAVAK agents were rounded up. Khomeini's headquarters became a prison and interrogation center, and large number of executions of military officers and high-ranking civil servants took place in the early days of the revolution (Graham, 1980, p. 241).

Monopolization of Power by the Clergy

The revolutionary forces which had joined together in Khomeini's name were extremely heterogeneous, consisting of religious conservatives, nationalists, Marxists dissidents, capitalists, and disaffected intellectuals. Aware of Khomeini's tremendous emotional appeal, these groups had attached themselves to his banner, ensuring the victory of the revolution (Graham, 1980, p. 251).

Despite hopes for a free and democratic Iran, following the revolution, a sector of the traditional religion monopolized the power. The Islamic republic, for which Khomeini had advocated for almost 40 years, was endorsed in a national referendum, which simply asked for a vote of yes or no to an undefined Islamic state. While ordinary Iranians, mesmerized by Khomeini and his promises, did not seem to question the nature of the new government, members of the secular and leftist groups, who feared that one

form of dictatorship was being exchanged for another, began voicing their concerns to no avail (Graham, 1980, p. 241). The clerics moved to establish the absolute rule of Islamic Jurist [*velayat-e faqih*], and severely restricted the basic freedoms and rights of political activists. Soon, the secular and leftist organizations found themselves in the midst of a political extermination[7] (Afshari, 2001, p. 23).

Homogenization of Society: Human Rights Violations During the 1980s

By the mid 1980s, the clerics had established an absolute domination over the country's government-controlled media, making it impossible for any one to escape the flood of the religious lexis and the display of Islamic ideology. The clerically dominated media set up to show fallacies of Marxism, nationalism, liberalism, or any other modern, ungodly ideologies that had made an impact on modern Iranian thought; filled with intimidation, denunciations, and ill-informed allegation and statements, the government aimed at creating "a new rhetorical frame of discourse" (Afshari, 2001, p. 21).

Women became the target of badgering in the state controlled media. The propagandist language denigrated modern women, attempting to instill guilt in them for "submitting to the imperialist schemes and temptations," and for "painting" their faces with cosmetics that the West sold them. While newspapers, magazines, radio, and television referred to women as Western dolls, the less educated crowd of *hezbollahis* began to harass and intimidate women on the streets, calling them "whores" in their

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[7] Some of the other major leftist opposition groups in Iran, which became the target of the slaughter by the government were: Rah-e Kargar; Kurdish Democratic Party; Communist Party Of Iran (Kumeleh); Union of Iranian Communists (Sarbedaran); Peykar.

faces, and in many instances, using physical violence, or the threat of, to force them to observe the Islamic dress code (Afshari, 2001, p. 21).

Young armed men with angry and fearsome expressions became the scourges of urban centers; their mission: "moral cleansing;" their task: purifying the society from all sinful habits of modern urban life. They appeared unexpectedly at any gathering where men and women interacted freely and cracked down on those who dared to entertain any "sinful thoughts," especially of popular music and dance. Making it impossible for women to attend schools, universities, or places of business without the Islamic headscarves, the clerics regime forced the emancipated women to follow the Islamic dress code.

> Color in clothing was banned, rouge was outlawed, cheers were silenced, and fun was exiled....' alcohol, music cassettes, videos, gambling, and prostitution were driven into thriving underground, profitable for both those who offered the vices and those who policed them (Afshari, 2001, p. 22).

Furthermore, the Islamic Cultural Revolution dismissed all secular teachers, closed the universities, and expelled thousands of qualified students and professors. Additionally, achievements of secular, nationalist, and leftist characters were erased from the history of modern Iran, giving way to the Islamic theorists (Afshari, 2001, p. 22).

As the clerics monopolized power, in June 1981, the Mojahedin attempted to overthrow the Theocratic regime by calling upon their members, mostly young and

inexperienced.[8] The Revolutionary Guard was too outfitted for the undeveloped attacks of the young Mojahedin causing their attempt to fall miserably. Following this day, the new Theocratic government began a wave of violent and bloody attacks on all political groups (Afshari, 2001, p. 23).

Portraying the opposition as the Imperialism's offshoots waging "war against God," the cleric regime suppressed all resistance inside and outside prisons, inducing "a fear that continued to keep everyone silent for more than a decade" (Afshari, 2001, p. 23). "Between June and November 1981, the Revolutionary Tribunals executed 2,665 political prisoners. The death toll continued to climb, reaching 5000 by August and 12,500 by June 1985" (Abrahamian, 1999, p. 215). Those prisoners who escaped executions were to live under crowded, torturous, and dehumanizing conditions, many even after completing their sentences.

At the end of the nine-year-long Iran-Iraq war, in July 19th 1988, the regime suddenly, without warning, isolated the prisoners from the outside world, canceling all visitations and taking away all means of communication, from newspapers to televisions; even prison guards were prohibited from responding to any of the prisoners' inquiries. "Thus began an act of violence unprecedented in Iranian history, unprecedented in form, content, and intensity. It even outdid the 1979 reign of terror" (Abrahamian, 1999, p. 210). Within the next two to three months, thousands of political prisoners were executed. Although the precise magnitude of the executions remains unknown to this day,

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[8] Following the revolution, the Islamic Republic had begun referring to Mojahedin, who were critical of the new regime's policies, with the term Monafeqin, meaning hypocrites. "The Koran uses this term to describe those in Medina who had pretended to be good Muslims while conspiring with the pagans in Mecca. The Prophet had pronounced a *monafeq* (hypocrite) to be worse than a *kafar* (nonbeliever)" (Abrahamian, 1999).

it is estimated that more than 4,000 prisoners, some with completed sentences, were executed. "One eyewitness puts it between 5,000 to 6,000, 1,000 from the left and the rest from Mojahedin" (Abrahamian, 1999, p. 215).

Those who were not executed in the summer of 1988 were subjected to horrifying tortures. Some were yet executed in the months that followed; others were released within the next two years: The male prisoners were released in the months following the massacre and the female prisoners, were let go of through a program of temporary releases, in 1990. The activists who participated in this study are among those who experienced the imprisonment during the 1980s, all of whom are living witnesses to the massacre of 1988.

Table 2 exhibits a synopsis of the relevant historical events from 1905 to 2001. The post-1990 events have been included in this table to provide the context for the year in which the interviews with the participants were conducted. As the data for this study was being gathered in the summer of 2001, not only three years had passed from the first nationwide student demonstrations in Iran since the early 1980s, but also the moderate Iranian president, Khatami, was running for a second term in office.

As narrative is not static in time and place, the participants' views reflected these recent events taking place in the Iranian context, and that their outlooks would have been presented differently had it not been for these latest changes in the political landscape of Iran.

Table 2

Historical Events of 1905- 2001

1905 - 1906	Massive protests by clerics and merchants against the Shah's mishandling of revenues and the foreign domination of Iranian assets leads to the Constitutional Revolution. The Shah signs the new constitution in December 1906, which effectively limits royal power and establishes an elected parliament.
1907	The Anglo-Russian Agreement between Russia and Britain divides Iran into spheres of influence, challenging Iran's moves toward independence.
1919	Britain constructs a plan to extend its influence over all of Iran, which would effectively make it a British colony; however, the agreement provokes intense opposition in Iran's Parliament, and it is never substantiated.
1921-1926	Reza Khan, an Iranian officer of the Persian Cossacks Brigade, extorts power away from the constitutional government, signaling an end to the Qajar Dynasty. He becomes prime minister in 1923, and proclaims himself the first shah of the new Pahlavi Dynasty in 1925. Reza Shah's eldest son, Mohammad Reza is proclaimed crown prince at the official coronation in 1926.

1941	Pressured by Britain and the Soviets forces, Reza Shah, who they see as sympathetic to the Nazi regime in Germany, abdicates his throne. His son, Mohammad Reza, becomes shah.
1951	The nationalist prime minister, Mossadegh, submits to Iran's Parliament a plan to nationalize the country's oil assets. Throughout the next couple of years, Mossadegh moves to limit foreign interests in Iran and to limit the Shah's powers.
1953	The Eisenhower administration approves a joint British-American operation to overthrow Mossadegh. After widespread rioting, and with help from the CIA and British intelligence services, Mossadegh is defeated and the Shah returns to power, ensuring support for Western oil interests and snuffing the threat of communist expansion.
1963	The Shah introduces his "White Revolution," announcing that he is extending the right to vote to women. The clergy are oppose the White Revolution, and the Shah to comes down heavily on its opponents. Ruhollah Khomeini is arrested after he harshly criticizes the Shah. His arrest incites demonstrations, which are quelled by the Shah's security forces.

1964	Khomeini is exiled to Turkey for his outspoken denunciation of the Shah's Status of Forces bill, which grants U.S. military personnel diplomatic immunity for crimes committed on Iranian soil. From Turkey, Khomeini moves to Iraq and remains there until 1978.
1978	In January, an article in an Iranian newspaper insults Khomeini, resulting in the eruption of violent demonstrations in the holy city of Qom, which soon spreads throughout the country. In September, in what is known now as Black Friday, government troops fire on demonstrators, and martial law is declared. Iraq, under pressure from the Shah, forces Khomeini to leave. Khomeini settles in Paris, and the Islamic Revolutionary Council, an underground assembly, is formed in Iran at his behest.
January-February 1979	In January, as civil unrest increases, the Shah and his family are forced into exile. On Feb. 1, Khomeini returns to Iran after 14 years in exile. That same month, the Shah's military announces its neutrality, and the monarchy collapses. Khomeini takes power and proclaims the Islamic Republic of Iran in April, and Mehdi Bazargan becomes prime minister.
December 1979	Iran's Constitution is ratified by national referendum. It is based upon velayat-e faqih, or the rule of the Islamic jurist. It establishes a religious authority, the Supreme Leader, who has ultimate authority.

January 1980	Bani-Sadr is elected the first president of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Khomeini, as Supreme Leader, still has ultimate control of the new government.
July 1980	The exiled Mohammad Reza Shah dies in Egypt.
September 1980	Iraq invades Iran. The war rages for 8 years, killing millions; it is the longest conventional war of the 20th century. Over the course of the conflict, the U.S. supplies weapons to both sides; however, it mostly favors Iraq, and this leads further resentment in Iran.
1981	Bani-Sadr, after increasing disagreements with Khomeini, is impeached in Parliament. His successor, Mohammad Ali Rajai, perishes in the second of two bombings targeting high-level government officials, including the prime minister and dozens of members of Parliament. The government blames the attacks on Mojahedin. Ali Khamenei is elected the third president of Iran.
1985	Khamenei is reelected president in national elections. The Assembly of Experts designates Ayatollah Hosein-Ali Montazeri as Khomeini's heir apparent.
July 18, 1988	Khomeini accepts a U.N.- negotiated cease-fire agreement ending the war with Iraq.
July-	Between July and September 1988, more than 4000 political prisoners are executed and berried in mass, unmarked graves. The families of the murdered are not informed of fate

September 1988	of their relatives until a few months after the killings.
June-July 1989	In early June, Khomeini dies and the "Assembly of Experts" chooses President Ali Khamenei as Supreme Leader. Three months earlier, Ayatollah Montazeri had lost his designation as Khomeini's successor because of his outspoken criticism of the regime. In July, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the speaker of Parliament, is elected president.
1997	In May 1997, Nearly 80 percent of eligible voters go to the polls to cast their ballots in the presidential election. Seventy percent vote for Mohammad Khatami, the former minister of culture and Islamic guidance, who is considered to be a moderate cleric.
July 1999	Students stage a six-day demonstration across the country in July in response to the closing of a reformist newspaper and a law proposed by Parliament that would limit press freedom. The students clash with hard-liners and the police, and more than 1,000 people are arrested in the biggest unrest since 1980.

February 2000	The 2000 parliamentary elections are held in mid-February, the sixth since the Republic's founding. Seventy percent of qualified voters cast their ballots. Reformist candidates defeat the conservatives and win 70 percent of the seats. Former President Rafsanjani finishes a humiliating 30th in Tehran, barely capturing the last of the city's seats in Parliament, and subsequently relinquishes his seat. Clerics, who had comprised more than half of the first Parliament in 1980, encompass only 14 percent of the new deputies in Parliament. Reformists control two of the three branches of government, the executive and legislative.
June 2001	Khatami wins the presidential elections by obtaining nearly 80 percent of the popular vote.

Summary

The historical materials included in this psychological study were in the service of understanding the context within which the stories and experiences of the participants were located. This chapter, therefore, summarized the views of a few authors on a number of formative events in the Iranian history. The significant occurrences in, and their implications for, the recent memory of Iran were described. Additionally, the sociopolitical circumstances leading to the arrest of the activists who participated in this study were highlighted, providing the reader with a contextual framework for appreciating their accounts. The following chapter contains the results of this study.

CHAPTER V

Results

Embedded in this chapter is the summary analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews with 9 of the 10 participants in this study. The themes that emerged from the stories of the activists were testimonies of personal pain, courage, hope, perseverance, and growth in the face of adversity. As each participant told his or her unique personal account, the similarities in themes attested to the commonality of their ordeal in the face of political oppression in Iran. The history unfolded through their attempts to make sense of their experiences and the weight and influence of the past in the shaping of one's present and future revealed itself.

This chapter is organized in the following mode: In the first part, I will briefly summarize the methodology used in this qualitative research, and I will present the common themes that emerged from the participants' stories, leading to the construction of categories and subcategories. In the second part, I will illustrate the results from the analysis of turning points in the lives of each of the activists, demonstrating the process of evolving. Lastly, I will present the summary of my thoughts and personal reflections, as were documented in my reflexive journal during the course of this project.

It is noteworthy to clarify that in this chapter, whenever words appear in between brackets, it is an indication that I have added words or phrases to elucidate a point. Additionally, I have used aliases to protect the identity of individuals, except in cases

where participants wished me to use their real names. While all participants believed that this research was a step toward documenting their ordeal and in the continuum of works for the protection of human rights, a number of participants believed it was important to use their actual names in order to add to the credibility of their accounts.

Accounts of Trauma and Resilience: The Emergent Themes

Chapter III provided a detailed description of the methodology used for collection and analysis of the data. Here, I will review briefly the steps involved in this process, which are as follows: A human rights activist who knew both the researcher and a group of survivors of torture from Iran nominated the initial potential participants. The participants who were nominated were contacted first, and they recommend others to be a part of this study.

Based on the guide for conducting consensual qualitative research provided by Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997), suggesting the use of between 8 to 15 participants, depending on the research questions, and derived from their assertion that using a larger sample is "unrealistic because of the time involved in examining each case and because additional cases typically add minimal new data" (p. 532), I proposed the inclusion of 6 to 9 participants in this study. Additionally, based on the notion that in qualitative inquiry the number of participants providing information is unimportant relative to the richness of the data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), sampling was concluded upon recognition that sufficient data was collected displaying similar, shared, and repeated themes as narrated by the participants regarding their experiences and the construction of meaning about their trauma, survival, and proactive fight for the rights of others.

Four to seven-hour long semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the participants. Each interview was transcribed, and checked once for accuracy, by the researcher. In accordance with the consensual method of analysis in qualitative research, the researcher, the coder, and the auditor analyzed the transcriptions simultaneously. Quotes from the transcriptions, which were used in the final presentation of the data were translated, from Persian into English, by the researcher. Furthermore, five of the nine transcriptions were translated in full length for the possible review by the committee members.

The narrative analysis of each of the interviews allowed the emergence of several themes, which were combined, and collectively used to create a number of main categories. Each main category was explicated by the descriptions of a number of subcategories, and subsequently, some of the subcategories comprised of major themes. Only those themes that were repeated in the stories of all participants were incorporated in the final results. Table 3 illustrates the categories, subcategories, and major themes. The method used for the analysis of the turning points will be described under the heading with the same name in the second part of this chapter.

The following section entails the actual results of the study. It is hoped that the previous section on the Iranian historical setting offered a contextual perspective for the reader to appreciate the stories of the participants. As explained in the chapter on Methodology, due to restrictions of selection criteria, which allowed the inclusion of leftist activists, and not that of former prisoners with adherence to other ideologies, I only analyzed data from 9 of the 10 conducted interviews. Table 4 presents identifying

information about the 5 women and 4 men participants whose accounts are presented here as the results of this study.

Development of Resiliency

This main category explains the ways in which each participant integrated various experiences of his or her life, found meaning in, and interpreted events contributing to the making of who she or he became. This category was created by combining both trauma (i.e., loss of father) and resilience (i.e., mastering the possible) themes. The following four subcategories comprise this main construct: Pre-arrest conditions: Formation of worldview; opposition's lack of sophistication and resources; role of beliefs and values in making sense of personal trauma; and resistance in prison. What comes next is the explication of each subcategory and its related themes.

Pre-Arrest Conditions: Formation of Worldview

Pre-arrest Conditions is a sub-category constructed based on the participants' descriptions of their lives prior to the arrest that led to their prolonged imprisonment in the Islamic Republic's prisons. This category was constructed, keeping in mind the importance of pre-trauma conditions in the individuals' response in the aftermath of trauma as documented in relevant literature. It entails the following main themes: Childhood influences, effects of political atmosphere on individual choices, and intergenerational legacy of political activity. Each of these themes delineates, in a unique way, the role of individual and communal influences in the construction of the participant's worldview.

Table 3

Categories, Subcategories, and Themes of Trauma and Resilience

Category	Subcategory	Themes
• Development of Resiliency	• Pre-Arrest Conditions: Formation of Worldview	• Childhood Influences • Effects on Political Atmosphere on Individual Choices • Intergenerational Legacy of Political Activity
	• Opposition's Lack of Sophistication	• Lack of Clear Vision • Projection: An Unrealistic Appraisal • Self-sacrifice and Commitment • Lack of Proactive Stance
	• Unremitting Torture	• System of Interrogation • Field Trial/Inquisition • Imprisonment and the Islamic Republic's Prison System

		• Condition of Release • Massacre of 1988
• Keeping Sane in the Midst of Insanity	• Individual and Collective Coping: Strategies in Prison	• Singing • Humor • Purposeful and Goal-Oriented Activities
	• Collective Trauma and Diffusion of Fear	• Need for Connectedness • Optimism: Staying Hopeful and Reinstalling Hope in Others
	• Family, A Source of Hope	• Visitation • Economic Resources • Solidarity

		• Appraisal of Crisis: Firm Belief in One's Convictions • Expectations
• Role of Community Support Before Imprisonment and After Release from Prison	• Effects on the Families • Physical • Psychosocial • Psychological	• Resistance in Prison
	• Consequences of Political Persecution, Imprisonment and Torture	• Making Sense of Personal Trauma

	• Transformation	• Reconsideration of Views and Approaches to Human Rights Issues After Prison • Growth in the Face of Adversity • Historical Memory

Table 4

Activists' Personal Data

Name	Sex	Education Prior To Arrest	Place of Birth	Prior Prison/ Arrest History	Years in IR Prison
Amir	M	Some College	Rasht	1976-79	5.6
Bijan	M	Bachelor's	Ahvaz	_	7
Effat	F	Some College	Langrood	1973	7
Hormoz	M	HS Diploma	Hamedan	1971-79	7
Mehdi	M	HS Diploma	Tehran	_	5
Mina	F	HS Diploma	Tehran	1981	9
Mitra	F	Some College	Tehran	_	7.8
Moneereh	F	Bachelor's	Tabriz	1979	9
Mojdeh	F	HS Diploma	Tehran	_	9

Note. I have used the abbreviation IR to refer to the Islamic Republic of Iran

Through these emerging themes the participants talked about the people, events, and inspirations influencing their journey of becoming political activists. While for some personal trauma had the most decisive effects on how they would decide their own stance in society later in life, for others, the general atmosphere of the country, exposure to socioeconomic and gender inequalities, as well as the political atmosphere of the era in which they grow up laid out the first stepping stones for looking beyond one's own predicament.

Childhood influences. Childhood influences was a theme, which referred to the people, events, or knowledge that influenced the individual during childhood. Whether it was the experience of personal trauma, being a witness to the distress of loved ones or that of larger community, being inspired by teachers, friends, books, or one's parents and siblings, the participants talked about these affects as having been influential in the way they began to view the world. These experiences and encounters also were said to have influenced their becoming interested in issues of justice and equality.

In the following passage, Bijan talked about the distress he encountered as a child. His story painted a powerful image of personal experience of childhood trauma and its deciding effect on the way he would see the world. Bijan faced an illness that changed the appearance of his eyes. The 6-year-old Bijan was traumatized not only by the illness itself, but more so by the way people, outside of his family, treated him after he became ill. This trauma was so overwhelming for the young Bijan that he withdrew from those who rejected and taunted him and found comfort in the world of books and inner cognitions:

... I resisted a lot in order not to accept it, but the external circumstances were stronger, and it can be said, more inhumane than one could withstand. It actually took a few years before I accepted my new condition, and from that point on, it's direct effect was that I took refuge in the internal world and began liking studying, reading and things of this nature more.... My perspective and understanding about people's inner world became more than what was expected for my age, meaning since childhood, I was looked at as an unusual person in the family in terms of my understanding of emotional issues... even like a professor, I don't know, a scientist and so forth because based on my special circumstances, I would pay close attention to the details of the human beings' lives. And this was my first motivation, which influenced my acceptance of many things that played a role in my life later.... First that there is no predetermined order in the world; there is neither God nor any other creation that could be relied on for creating order in society, human beings or society...or there would be no reason for some one to undergo such an accident and for no one to help him.... On the other hand I became extremely sensitive to justice; meaning, it could be said that it was the pillar, which I later entered politics.

Moneereh was also struck with childhood trauma and loss. Her father died when she was only 11 years old, and with his death, Moneereh and her family experienced tremendous changes, some of which were very painful for Moneereh. Despite this loss, Moneereh recognized the new and positive inspirations brought about by change and verbalized how she was influenced by these changes as well as by her siblings. This is how she recalled this period in her life and the effects it had on her:

...And then, with my father's death our lives changes greatly; ... I mean I experience such pain and bitterness since age 11 that I distance myself from the happiness of childhood. All of a sudden, the breadwinner of the family dies, and my younger brother and I were still children, and the rest were teenagers; no one in the family worked. When my father died, ...he had become bankrupt and hadn't left anything behind for his children but debts. That is why I say my father's death ... is the beginning of a new life; a life full of hardship. First of all, we moved from Tabriz, which at that time was a relatively small city, to Tehran, and this was a very big change... We move to Tehran, everything changes; smaller house, worse economic situation, and just coming to Tehran itself, foreign people with a language that was different from our mother tongue... it was essentially a new experience, having to learn new things, ... causing me to separate myself from my childhood prematurely. ...Despite it being bitter because of financial reasons... different language, at the beginning I was humiliated because I didn't have command of the Farsi language, but on the other hand, my

life changes; we enter a very active and innovational life in the Capital. For example, my older sisters begin to work and study simultaneously, something that wasn't possible in small cities, at least not 30 years ago... one of my brothers enters college, another begins working. A new phase begins. The picture of this phase is coupled with work and dash, and also love of learning and of changing... this new environment gives me new things. ... Issues enter our family, and involve me in it as well, that are very new; books come into the family environment, political issues, social issues enter the family; newspaper becomes daily, a part of life's necessity. This was because other family members, I mean my sisters and brothers were older than I and familiar with these issues, were interested in them and well I would actually be influenced by them.

Hormoz's story exemplified the influences of other sources of inspirations, from teachers to witnessing the poverty of others. Here is how he talked about such influences in his life as he was growing up:

The changes brought about by the White Revolution affected my family's finances... my father turned into, he used to be a merchant ... but he began having to sell his lands... the financial problems, the family problems... two of my sisters had for example gotten married and had left the family... these would add to the family problems, and one would want to escape from the house... were would one escape to? I would go hiking with my friends... I had two groups of friends... one was from the lowest social group, who all ended up destroyed, almost all of them, addiction, jail... I had another social group who were studious... their families were more organized, their environments were better... well I would be attracted to their world... so and so's sister is in the army, the other one's doesn't wear chador; what is mine like? Well, one doesn't even decide about these then, but it leaves its effects on the individual... we had a teacher, our history teacher, who was politically minded... He would enchant me when he would talk about history... I had a tendency to look at the underclass, pay attention to the poor... I hated poverty, I hated deprivation; I would get upset, it would hurt me; I would empathize with them... because our neighborhood was like this; this feeling wasn't from within the family but my surroundings would make me feel this way... some families had nothing, no rice... you could see it in the market; their meat was separate; for example, the butcher would ask us which part of the meat we wanted, but he would tell them, meaning would give them the smallest piece of the meat... on the other hand, cinema had positive influence; books had these influences, the neighborhood; in addition, the school and the influences of the teachers... Anyway, in tenth grade the atmosphere of my life changed... when I went to tenth grade, I entered the scene of political activities...

The theme of childhood influences depicted the impact of early encounters in the lives of the participants. The participants' accounts elucidated the notion that the formation of worldview took place in relation to the influences from individuals and communities. This theme pointed out the role of systems and values within which the individuals lived and with which they interacted. These systems included the family, inspirational individuals, school, neighborhood communities, and the society at large. This theme also referred to the interpretation of and response to trauma as effected by the family system's reaction to and dealings with adversity.

Intergenerational legacy of political activity was another theme, which fell under the subcategory of Pre-arrest condition: Formation of worldview. This emerging theme is discussed next.

Intergenerational legacy of political activity. While some of the participants alluded to various events in the history of Iran, the single most salient recent historical occurrence mentioned by all the participants was the Coup d'état of 1953, and the disappointment of the past generation in politics was the theme permeating through their stories when referring to this historical landmark. After the Coup d'état of 1953, and the defaming of the political parties, especially, the depiction of Tudeh Party as the betrayer of Mossadegh, people became cynical about political activists and distrustful of any move toward democratization. Hence, many families discouraged their children from engaging in political life; however, there were others who familiarized the younger generation with the history, which was absent from the schoolbooks, unwittingly creating in them a curiosity about the concealed past and a thirst for creating change.

Bijan talked about this disappointment and at the same time verbalized how he had been influenced by and had become curious about the history of political movement in Iran:

> ... By the end of high school, we were identified by the SAVAK, and they had given some warnings to our families: 'tell your children not to get involved in such matters.' So, my father tried to, not to put pressure on me, but to tell me to be cautious. In addition to my father and my grand mother, who played some roles in regards to these issues in my life, because my grand mother loved me madly and she would spend a lot of time with me and I would spend a lot of time with her, and she would talk to me a lot and would in fact satisfy my emotional needs, and she had been a supporter of the National Front and Mossadegh, and would transfer her beliefs to me this way. But there was also another person who played a big role in my life in terms of politics, and he was my father's cousin, who was one of the old-time Tudeh members who had served prison time after the 1953 suppression, then he had escaped to Kuwait after release from prison, and had returned after many years. When he returned, I was eleven years old... he would take me on trips... would go to see his old friends and they would talk and I would listen to them. Then, he would talk about a lot of things during this time; especially it was because of him that I know of the history of Tudeh Party's activities in Iran. He had been turned off by politics to some extend due to the hits the Party and also he had endured, but such individuals can't forget their past and political issues always exudes from them. This also had played an important role in my becoming involved with political issues.

The intergenerational legacies transferred to the participants allowed them early exposure to the history of political life in Iran, and gave them the basic understanding about and the introduction to political thoughts. It provided the participants with an indistinct, but formative insight to evaluate and question the activities and policies of the Shah and his ruling regime. The legacy passed on to this generation also created skepticism toward parliamentary approach to politics, and set the stage for their sympathy toward the armed guerrillas later in their political development.

Effects of political atmosphere on individual choices. This was a theme, which explained the power of political life in the society at any given time, its influence on the formation of one's views, and it's effects on the individual choices. The following is Effat's accounts of this phenomenon:

> When my brother went to prison, I was in high school. I was really politically involved... they took me to SAVAK when I was fifteen years old. It wasn't because of my brother though; the atmosphere in the North was essentially such that it would raise you like that. I was going to the libraries since 6th grade and would read books. In school, when I went to high school, I would write certain essays... when they took me there, it's interesting, I felt, they are receiving me well, I've become an important person; meaning, when they told me the Guerilla girl, I became really happy, as if I had wished for this... Well they had reported that I had written essays or for instance had read books.... I was there for thirty-six hour, and then my father came and took me back, and in our town, they would refer to me and say the Guerilla girl is coming. Meaning, they, without wanting, meaning the Shah's system, Shah's regime... threw you in a situation, in a wrong direction, which your future was really determined by it. Well, based on the circumstances in society, if I wouldn't have become that then, I don't know what else I would become, but I would have become like one of those political individuals who were around me, none of whom, in my opinion, had any correct political analysis then...

Effat's explanations alluded to the consequences of subversion in the repressive society she lived in. It referred to the reality of life in Iran in the 1970s, a period in which "guerrilla organizations became more active, and oppression became more extreme" (Gasiorowski, 1993, p. 264). During this time, the Iranian Intelligence Ministry, SAVAK, was using various means to control the public and the governmental institutions, and to instill fear among the masses. According to Graham (1980), "for SAVAK there were only those who approved of Mohammad Reza Shah and those who disapproved. Disapproval was potentially subversive and in need of frequent surveillance to check whether it had crossed over into outright opposition" (p. 145).

The controls on free public opinion, books, and academic literatures were so extreme that even the idea of reading certain books was too threatening for the regime. The implications were that even those contemplating political thoughts other than admirations for the Shah would be targeted by the authorities, and in some cases, their path would be changed once the public idolized them as heroes.

Opposition's Lack of Sophistication and Resources

This subcategory emerged as the participants retrospectively analyzed and critically viewed the operations of the opposition groups, especially that of their own affiliations. As the activists narrated their stories, the following repeated themes came to light: Lack of clear vision, projection: An unrealistic appraisal, self-sacrifice and commitment, and lack of proactive stance.

Lack of clear vision. This theme referred to the political activists' desire for establishment of justice and freedom without having a clear understanding of the Iranian society's realistic needs and potentials, and without theorizing about what form of alternative government could respond to the needs of the people. Amir talked about the vagueness of the activists' goals, their wish for abolishing oppression and establishing justice for all, and their failure to sketch clearly the structure of their ideal political system. He stated:

> When I was in high school, I became familiarized with Marxism and ideology and so forth... then, when I was in first year of university, the issue of what we want became more serious for me. Meaning, OK, Shah is bad, what does it mean? Does it mean Shah has to go? Then, who would come?... and essentially how must we overthrow the Shah? I liked to know what had our people done, the Coup d'état of 1953, how they had ousted and then brought him back. Then, there were questions

for me, what did we want to come? How did we want the outcome to be? The People's Fadayi had been formed at this time, and we would try to read their writings. Che Guevara and so forth would not tell us what we wanted, they would just tell us how we could get rid of the Shah; it would show us the path: The way to do this is through armed struggle... not party activities. Then, we wouldn't essentially understand, I'm talking about myself, I wouldn't understand what has the Tudeh Party done that is so bad, or what are activities of a Party. I thought it meant talking and not acting... the Fadayi Guerillas would say: come hold a gun in your hands... then, the people will join you, then they will destroy this system and will bring about another system. That second part was essentially ambiguous, it seems we didn't have any interest in understanding this second... what will they bring? What is it? .... These issues were so beautiful to us that the second part would become faded. Its beauty was in its sincerity, that they were doing this without expecting anything in return...

Hormoz described such lack of clear vision among the leaders of the Left Movement existing in the early days after the 1979 Revolution. In this regard, he asserted:

... then, for example, such a simple mindset, we had no analysis of the classes, no social analysis, no analysis of our activities. Meaning, we had become just like the masses with one difference, the people knew what they wanted, they wanted Khomeini; we didn't know what it was that we wanted and essentially how to achieve it. If you look at that period's fliers, programs and brochures, it was all grabbing at the past glories. There is no manifesto; socialism only existed in slogans...

The above quotes referred to the Left Movement's lack of clear understanding of Iran's socioeconomic infrastructure, which resulted in its failure to offer correct political strategies. While the Left Movement in Iran was not terribly young, years of despotism and repression had caused discontinuity in its progress. The movement's detest for the previous generation of lefties' parliamentary strategies, which were perceived as despondent failures, prompted the new generation of activists to feel the need for "taking action" in the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, taking time for analysis and the study

of the state of affairs within the country was seen as *pacifism*, and in the words of Bijan, "was not taken seriously," and was therefore frowned upon by this generation of activists.

These factors, had led the activists to apply the theories and the means of struggle used in other countries, which differed in their socioeconomic infrastructure from Iran, to their fight against corruption and injustice. Thus, armed struggle used in Latin America, Vietnam, and China, for instance, was viewed as the appropriate approach to struggle in Iran. With no substantial connections made with the masses, on the brink of the Revolution of 1979, the remaining activists in the Left Movement were unprepared to provide appropriate leadership for the thousands of passionate sympathizers, who were in need of direction and organization. This later contributed to the high price individuals affiliated with the opposition groups had to pay.

Projection: An unrealistic appraisal. This theme communicated the distance between the leftist political groups and the Iranian masses. It represented the groups' inability to find their ways into the people's lives and to address their needs. Mojdeh talked about this disconnection with the people:

> ... We had a stand on the street. We would go there starting in the morning, stand up on our feet for 8 hours; we would talk, discuss. The thugs would come and beat us up, two minutes later we would reorganize, would sell newsletters, do everything, but we were only in touch with the pedestrians, who would come and go; no real contacts were being made. ...We were saying, even then, it was right before June 20th, ... what is the use of this? We had reached the conclusion that we weren't making any systematic connections with people... playing an audiotape there could do the same thing. But this was problematic in my view ...and this was because the thinking of the political organizations, at least the one I was working with, was focused on being present, a superficial and not a penetrating presence. That is why when the events of June 20th took place, when that presence was no longer there, no genuine connection had been established, therefore the regime was able to do what it pleased, essentially eradicating all the political organizations inside Iran.

Mojdeh's reference to unrealistic appraisal of the people reflected the limitations of the political groups in their ability to understand, realistically, the role of religion in the lives of Iranian populace. For the Iranians, the roots of religion ran deep. The average person's full understanding of communism or socialism went as far as thinking that individuals believing in these ideologies did not believe in God. This view was further encouraged by the Islamic Republic's propaganda campaign against all ideologies other than its version of Islam. The regime referred to Marxists as people who waged war against God and promoted corruption on earth. Understanding the cultural values regarding the role of women in Iranian society, and the importance of chastity and honor, the regime further publicized fallacies about the leftists, claiming that these activists' belief in communal practices also meant "sharing" of the women.

In addition to the traditional beliefs that promoted the distance between the leftist organizations and the Iranian people, the intergenerational skepticism about the role of the Tudeh Party during the oil campaign in the 1950s created further separation between the two. The Iranians believed that the Tudeh Party had contributed to bringing down the nationalist Prime Minister Mossadegh's administration in the coup d'etat of 1953, betraying both him and the masses.

These factors posed major obstacles for the leftist organizations in presenting their ideas to the masses, even when their ideas concerned the public's immediate political and economic interests as related to the post-revolution theocratic regime. The catastrophic implications of this disconnection from people showed itself on and after June 20, 1981. The Islamic Republic did not face any reaction from the public while, in the words of Mojdeh, "essentially eradicating all the political organizations inside Iran."

Self-sacrifice and commitment. This theme emerged as the participants explained

how thousands of individuals, including themselves, had committed their lives to their

cause. This is Mina's negative appraisal of this experience:

> I remember I used to feel hunger a lot. I would work, I would give some of my money to my family, so that they wouldn't talk and I be able to do what I wanted; I went through a lot of hardships at that time and they wouldn't let me continue my political activities. It was like so easy that, for example, in an intellectual family, or in an open family, they would tell you you're allowed. They would block you too; I had been hit by them too because of this. Then, I would feel so weak, feeling hungry. Sometimes, I had stayed hungry for so long that I would feel faint from the smell of pastry when I would pass by a bakery. I was giving half of my money to the organization, exactly half, I think I was making 1000 Toman[9]; then I would give 500 Toman to my mother, 500 Toman to the organization. Then, I would get 20 Toman from my mother for one month... These are very important, pay attention... meaning here you don't think of yourself. You think of the 10 fliers you are distributing and the report you can put together about the people's reactions to it. ... Indeed, forfeiting what values in place of which... Meaning, distributing a few fliers for the price of a human being, the arrest of a human being.

In this passage, Mina explained how she was willing to face many challenges for

her political beliefs. For Mina, self-sacrifice also had roots in her family history. Her

parents had forfeited many aspects of their lives and had suffered the consequences of

their own activism as members of the Tudeh Party since the 1950s. As their cynicism

had grown toward political involvement, Mina's family had tried to prevent her from

getting involved in activities that might have serious consequence. Mina, however,

continued in her chosen path, believing that the sacrifices she made would bring about

justice at last, as had believed generations of activists before her.

The concept of self-sacrifice in the Iranian culture goes at least as far back as the

era of Islamic incursion of that country, if not before that time. "Both normative Islam

and Shiism, starting out with a strong drive to seek authority and recognition, each

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[9] Iranian currency.

initially honored the martyr's quest and taught the need for self-sacrifice" (Winters, 1997, p. 5). The foundational symbols of Shiism were found in the assassination of Ali, the Prophet Mohammad's son-in-law, and the struggles and supposed voluntary death of Hussein, Ali's son, and his followers.

"Shiism, which became a state religion in Iran under the Safavid Dynasty in the sixteenth century, was born from belief in an appointed rule, full confidence in its religious authority and legal justification, and pressing desire to convert others to its agenda" (Winters, 1997, p. 1). In defense of this doctrine, Shii Muslims found themselves against the consistently hostile and superior cultural, religious, and military forces of the establishments. Martyrdom in this context meant defending themselves as a small and illegal group against much larger, better-equipped forces believing them to be dissenting.

"Mortyrdom was a proof of one's convictions and sincerity, and since it was often a likely outcome of Shii's struggle against his opponents, it came to be equated with a host of rewards in the afterlife" (Winters, 1997, p. 2). According to Winters, Shiism in Iran melded with the Persian culture and way of life. Within this cultural context, which was greatly influenced by the Shii ideology, the notion of self-sacrifice permeated through the Iranian political ethos, even in the Left Movement.

Other reasons cultivated the concept of self-sacrifice. Throughout the political history of Iran, except for short interludes, subversion met with severe consequences such as deprivation from socioeconomic rights, imprisonment, torture, execution, and life in exile. Political activism under repressive regimes, deprivation from parliamentary involvement, and finding underground political activity as the only viable option for

bringing about change made martyrdom a very real possibility, thus giving subversion the connotation of self-sacrifice.

In the 1970s, the armed liberation movements in Algeria, Latin America, and Palestine influenced the thinking of and became the model for the new generation of activists in Iran, thus making self-sacrifice inevitable once again. This thinking, which had roots in the culture of the land, continued even after the Revolution when armed struggle was no longer considered, by many organizations, the way to achieve political change.

After their release, many like Mina, who survived the political extermination by the Islamic Republic of Iran, reflected upon the actions they had taken, and the sacrifices they had made. Perhaps, for the first time in the political history of Iran, these individuals took a reflexive look, evaluated their past actions and beliefs, critiqued the mistakes of the past, and paved the way for finding new ways for the future. This concept is revisited under the heading of reconsideration of views and approaches to struggle for justice.

Lack of proactive stance. This theme specified the opposition groups' lack of preparedness in the face of the Islamic republic's assault, and their becoming paralyzed and unable to protect their members once the government's attacks became full-fledged. Mitra spoke about this lack of preparedness by explaining her own situation:

> I made a very big mistake; I had been in other places for the past two or three months, but the same night I was arrested, I had gone home... my sister and brother-in-law were also members of the underground organization... they had a one year old baby at that time... my brother-in-law, however, had some conflicts with the organization and had cut his connections with it... I was a hundred percent sure that if I were to escape, they would come to get them, and would put

them under pressure because of me. I had gone there to convince him to leave together, the three of us plus the baby. But he was in a particular emotional state... it could be said he was committing suicide in order to take revenge from the organization... he said 'the comrades should have thought about our safety...' I said 'let's say they didn't do it; we have to think of something for ourselves now.' Of course, I had just gone to see my family, get my stuff together, and leave somehow. It wasn't clear to me how; I at least wanted to leave Tehran and see what I could do, since the connections with the organization were cut; meaning via private not organizational ways. And in fact this is the same thing my brother-in-law was saying, that we should leave by the way of organizational help, and we shouldn't have been left like this. But, well, all the leaders had gone. We sat very relaxed and had supper... the television was broadcasting Amoui's interview[10] ... five minutes into the interview, the door bell was sounded... Five or six people came in to the house... the Pasdar had warrant in my name...

Mitra's explanation was an example of a theme commonly expressed by the participants. This theme elucidated two notions. The first was the opposition's underestimation of the regime, the sophistication of its intelligence capabilities, and the extent of its use of systematic brutality. The fraction of the clergy monopolizing power following the 1979 Revolution, with the exception of a few, was representative of the group of the clergy, which had been viewed as a politically inexperienced and unsophisticated faction. The second concept was a political miscalculation of the balance of power, which led the opposition to overestimate its own resources as well as the support they needed from the community.

These naïve and idealistic views left the political organizations vulnerable and ill equipped for protecting their members when the waves of attack from the regime began.

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[10] Amoui was one of the leaders of the Tudeh Party, imprisoned for 24 years during Shah's era. The interview Mitra is referring to is one of many public recantations shown on public TV, in order to kill the morale among the opposition, and to turn the public against these groups.

It further left individual activists unprepared for thinking of alternative plans for protecting themselves.

The Pervasive Nature of Political Trauma in Iran

This category described the prolonged and all-encompassing nature of state sponsored terror, which resulted in the participants' traumatic experiences. It included themes corresponding to the nature of the atmosphere in the country in the 1980s. The subcategories that make up this main category are as follow: Homogenization of society, arrest: Deception and violence, Unremitting torture, and Types of torture.

Homogenization of Society

This subcategory emerged as the participants began to talk about the Islamic Republic's plan to make the entire society conform to the Islamic doctrine, and to achieve this goal set in motion a plan to asphyxiate all divergent voices Participants referred to calculated and systematic steps taken by the regime in this regard. The two themes that comprised this subcategory were attack on organizations and anticipating arrest. Mina described her experience of the early years following the revolution and talked about the changes in the society:

> I remember from 1979 to 1981, there was some freedom; it was relatively open atmosphere. Individuals were thinking about certain equal rights and were joining organizations to do group work. Then, you would notice that they are blocking you in this... Weren't we all in the revolution together? Didn't we all say down with the Shah?... my feeling at that time is that I don't want any human being to be oppressed and I denounce inequality. I make a boundary with the regime, the Islamic Republic, and where, they say ninety-nine percent voted yes, I vote no. The boundaries are now clear. You want to safeguard these boundaries, and when you do, you see that you are confronted. When you go to distribute fliers or newsletters, you see that the Hezbollahies attack and suppress you. This is a

period when political activity is permitted, but you are gradually feeling certain hardships; this is a time when Iran is experiencing an unknown future.

Mojdeh's account helped explain how the relatively open atmosphere of the post-revolution turned into a full-fledged oppression after June 1981:

> ... After the events of June 20th we continued to stay active. At that time, distribution became an underground operation; well every time going for distribution meant facing death ...because at that time one flier was execution. If you remember, in 1981, so many of those who had been arrested with leaflets were executed, and we knew that too... because at that time, those who didn't want to continue with the activities, there was a thousand and one excuses, one could easily bring an excuse and cut the connections, the organization would not be hard on the individuals either, since they knew everyone was going to the execution squads; it's not a joke; meaning, anyone who was continuing in those years was doing it with a certain level of awareness. Before that, there had been an open atmosphere; there weren't any executions in that fashion. Anyone could join, but after June 20th, the person had to really come to terms with herself.

In the above passage, Mojdeh alluded to several factors regarding the political circumstances of the early 1980s. First, she located a time in history when Iran's relatively open political atmosphere turned deadly. Secondly, by referring to continuing political activism under extreme oppression, and "doing it with a certain level of awareness," she called attention to the continuity of the notion of self-sacrifice, further demonstrating that political involvement under oppressive systems does not bring about glory and prosperity but imprisonment, torture, death or exile. Lastly, Mojdeh's reference to "a thousand and one excuses, one could easily bring an excuse and cut the connections...," may be interpreted as an underlying assumptions of a political culture within which self-protection may be seen as a selfish act.

Attack on organization. The participants referred to the Islamic Republic's attempts to wipeout the face of the country of all those who do not adhere to an Islamic

ideology and to the rule of the Islamic jurist. A way to achieve this was through extermination of the political organizations. These attacks took place in various steps beginning with the mass arrest, torture, and execution of members of the most vocally oppositional groups and ending with organizations that had supported the Islamic Republic. This is how Mina talked about the attacks on organizations in 1981:

> ... the 20th of June, I was in prison for two and a half days; my family didn't know anything... well, the scenes were very painful. When they arrested me, they first took me to a place and kept me there. There were many of us. Many of us, meaning, it was unbelievable; then, they took us somewhere else; from there to Evin prison. When they took us there, there were so many of us that were all sitting in the yard. Then, they took us to the apartment; they called it apartment... these were the houses in which the soldiers or Pasdars who were working there were staying at night. They had taken them out and put us in there because they'd seen that there was so many of us. They had prepared themselves for a crackdown a few months before this... the pressures were horrifying, horrifying; meaning, I can say that if one person would stand on line for the bathroom in the morning, she could only get one turn. There was only one bathroom; that's it. Everyone was sleeping on the floor; there was no carpet... then, beatings, they had beat up everyone...

The Islamic Republic also used routine interviews and public recantations, during which the tortured repentant would publicly denounce their respective organizations and would confess to their sins and their wrong doings in regard to their opposition to the Islamic Republic and/or Islamic ideology. The most famous of these public recantations were those of the leaders of the Tudeh Party, some of whom had served more than twenty years in Shah's prisons.

Anticipating arrest. Anticipating arrest was a theme that described the period following the attacks on political organizations and the time before each activist was actually taken into custody. All the participants referred to this period as a high-anxiety time filled with unsettling and disruptive occurrences. It is during this period when the

activists, grossly limited in resources, awaited their inevitable and eventual captures. Mehdi referred to this period as a time during which he had nowhere to turn to and lived in a constant state of instability and anxiety:

> I remember, in relation to myself, my own experience, they told me don't go home, home is dangerous; your house is dangerous, you mustn't go there. Well, where should I go? Meaning, this is my first question, isn't it? Well based on the friendships and relationships I have with my own organization, in my situation, I know what the circumstances are like. With the financial assistance of everyone, get the leadership out of the country, the problem all organizations were facing then; well, now where should I go? Some nights when I had no place to go, I would sleep in my car... It was cold, you couldn't leave the car running; you would turn it off, you would freeze in the below zero temperature. I would for instance go into the airport, as if I had to pick up someone; I'd go there one night, two nights; then you would see there are a number of people who are always there; meaning there is another homeless who is just like you... I knew they had the same problem. Then, there were bombings in Tehran. Secret police is everywhere. Then, after a week, I would end up having to go to my cousin's, whom I haven't visited in five years for example; by the way, she knows I'm politically active. Very respectful, she welcomes me, but she is suspicious, saying why has he come to my house. Well, this was a stress. Meaning it was pressure on both her... and on me, not wanting anything to happen to them... It was obvious who was the loser in an unequal fight... I would call this period the era of inevitability; meaning sooner or later this would have happened. Those who escaped did it by chance.

Mojdeh's account of the period leading to her arrest was a description of the environmental stressors creating a state of psychological unrest:

> ... It was horrifying from one moment to the next... Our house was near a small intersection; then, there were a few speed bumps there; anytime a car wanted to pass, it had to break, and you don't believe it, every time I remember my mother's face, with each car breaking, it was just a speed bump, the cars didn't want to stop by our house... I would look at my mother's face... I was fearful myself, but I would never forget my mother's face to this day. Think about it, how many cars could pass by there in a day, and every single time, this old woman's body would tremble with the thought that they may have come to take me. And this constant fright, what should we call it? It's called fear, anxiety. When going to an appointment, constantly, for example, you had to check yourself for one or two hours after each appointment before returning home... But this situation was persistent; meaning, the feeling that at any moment they may ambush you; you're under surveillance, and the fear of what if you put others in danger by transferring

the surveillance to them. I can say that living in a constant state of anxiety and fear is the particularity of that period.

For a number of reasons, perhaps not all of which are pinpointed here, arrest was inevitable for many of the activists, who made a conscious decision to stay behind to continue the struggle. First, for a period of 2 to 3 years, from the birth of Revolution to just before the regime's crackdown on the opposition, the majority of opposition members and sympathizers were involved in overt, public activities, making the identification of many a simple task for the regime. For example, many high school students had been arrested at the time of registration for school (Baradaran, 1997, p. 9). Secondly, no one was aware of the magnitude of the Islamic Republics' use of rampant torture, which had broken down and driven many of the prisoners to repent (Bamdad, 2001, p. 11). The regime had subsequently used repentant prisoners by placing them in cars and roaming the streets to identify other activists.

Another contributing factor to the activists' anticipation of arrests was the project of *Malek va Mostajer* [landlord and tenant]. Based on this project, the real estate agencies were held responsible for handing over, to the neighborhood Komiteh, a copy of all their transactions, including rent, lease, and buy or sell of any property. In addition, all tenants became responsible for reporting the condition and timing of their resettlement, and all landlords were held accountable for telling the Komiteh about their prospective tenants (Bamdad, 2001, p. 274). This project added yet another element to the opposition's limited resources and lack of proactive stance in regard to protecting its members, and consequently, many activists were arrested in the process of relocating or attempting to find safe houses (Bamdad, 2001, p. 275).

Lastly, contribution of the masses to the arrests, torture, and execution of the opposition members is noteworthy. The propaganda of the regime against the opposition was so poisonous, and the religious beliefs of the average Iranian, in the first few years after the Revolution, so fervent that in many cases, the opposition members were pointed out to the authorities by the ordinary Iranians such as a 9-year-old boy in the case of Mina. All that in addition to the war, which had been imposed by Iraq, provided people the grounds for seeking stability from the Islamic regime, and seeing the opposition a liability for their security. In relation to the role of such bystanders, Staub (1989) writes,

> Sometimes silence results from fear, but that is not the whole explanation. Everywhere people tend to accept definition of reality provided by 'experts,' their government, or their culture. Lack of divergent views, just-world thinking, and their own participation or passivity change bystanders perception of self and reality so as to allow and justify cruelty. (p. 88)

To reiterate, social conditions, opposition's limited resources and lack of proactive stance, regime's use of massive systematic torture and policing along with religious and cultural beliefs of the bystanders contributed to the arrest of the opposition members as a foreseeable occurrence. This inevitability in turn created persistent conditions of psychological unrest for individuals in anticipation of their arrest.

Arrest: Deception and violence. The participants explained their arrest as an act involving humiliation, violence, and deception both on the personal as well as the public level. Table 5 demonstrates the circumstances surrounding the participants' arrests as well as the number of years they served in the Islamic Republic's prisons. The captured

were blindfolded once put in the car, and when resisted, were violently forced to put on blindfolds. Four of the participants, Mitra, Moneereh, Mojdeh, and Hormoz were arrested while in the presence of their family members and in their homes. Mehdi, Mina, and Amir were arrested on the street.

Mehdi stated how the Pasdars[11] would use "psychological warfare" to create confusion in the public's mind in order to counteract any possible objections to the arrests. He explained:

> Usually drugs were the excuse they would use for attacking the activists, who were arrested on the street, somehow people would gather around; It was justifiable; everyone usually hates drugs, the issue of drug dealing.

Mina was arrested on the street after an attempt to distribute leaflets in a bus. Her arrest involved violence. She was threatened and violated both physically and psychologically. She heard the Pasdars deceive the crowd about the reasons for her arrest in order to legitimize this violent act:

> ... There were three of us in a team. We would distribute fliers on buses... I arrived and saw no one was there; I couldn't take the fliers back, ... I sat there. I had to do it myself. I distributed them ... a huge mistake; it was a big mistake to talk to anyone. There was a 7 year old boy, I said, I said 'did you see this?' Not 7 years, I can say 9 years old. You see? They had really turned the society into a spy that had to turn me in as an anti-revolutionary... I told him, did you see the flier? ... The boy said, 'ya.' ... Then, when the boy left, I suddenly realized... they stopped the bus in front of the Komiteh [committee], a gun was pointed to my head; I was sitting down. He said I blow up your brains right here if you move.... we've received a report that you have grenades; show whatever you have. I said 'I have nothing.' He asked 'did you distribute these?' I said, 'me?' That child was with them too. I thought what a mess; meaning I just realized what had happened; and well, it happened, meaning I was arrested.... A number of women came and said 'let her go, why have you arrested her? What has she done?' They said 'she is a bad woman, a prostitute;' they said 'she has grenades'.... See, all the while the door [of the Komiteh] had not been closed, they had surrounded me, when the door was closed, they attacked my body, pardon me, like animals; they were grabbing at me all over my body. They were

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[11] Pasdar means guard. After the revolution, the Revolutionary Guard, or Sepah Pasdaran, was the most powerful force in the country when compared with its other counterparts, the military and the police.

grabbing at me to see if I had any grenades.... There was a man with green eyes. He threatened me and said some nonsense: 'we got you good; we won't let any of you breath'.... I was there for a few hours in a room. Then, they brought me in and told me to put on a blindfold.... Then, he told me to sit down; he said 'there's a chair.' He told me to turn around, I turned; now, I was blindfolded, I don't see any thing. He said 'sit.' As soon as I went to, I felt like I was falling into a valley; then, my legs went up. When my legs went up, he kicked me exactly between my legs with his boots on, on my genital. I had a horrible pain; I only felt that my entire body turned hot. Then he told me to come out. I went out, he started to beat me with the handle of his semi-automatic riffle. He beat me up so much on my shoulder and neck that I wasn't conscious of anything anymore. He threw me in the car and drove away... we went to another Komiteh. They threw me there. I had begun bleeding [vaginally].

Throughout the history of Iran, the clergy had opposed the emancipation of women and had deemed women's participation in society as one the causes of immorality (Graham, 1980, p. 220; Tabari, 1983, p. 61). Furthermore, as Millet (1994) indicated, the first premise of Islamic theocracy is a revitalized male supremacy upon which all other hierarchal thinking rests (p. 286). Following such convictions, the Islamic Republic began restricting the rights of women in society from the very first days it took over power. The absolute control of power by men, who had gradually attempted to wipe out women's participation from the social, judicial, political, and business domains, was being challenged by women whose place was at home, and their duty was to raise children. But even within the "traditional" Iranian family system, women did not attain equal rights. Within this context, men held the power; "sons commanded and daughters complied" (Mortazi-Langroodi, 2003, p. 1), recreating a cycle of generational inequality between men and women.

According to Martin-Baro (1996), "an act of violent repression against the oppressed has a prior justification that prevents any type of dissonance from presenting"

(p. 156). Under the Islamic theocracy, which exacerbated the patriarchal values of
Iranian society,

Table 5

Circumstances of Arrest

Name	Year Arrested	Age	Location	Arrested With	Affiliation
Amir	1983	29	Street	_	Fadayi-Maj.
Bijan	1983	37	Work	_	Fadayi-Maj.
Effat	1984	26	Street	Husband	Fadayi-Maj.
Hormoz	1981	31	Home	Wife	Rah-e Kargar
Mehdi	1984	27	Street	_	Fadayi- Keshtgar
Mina	1981	19	Street	_	Fadayi-Min.
Mitra	1983	26	Home	Sister/Brother-in-Law	Tudeh Party
Moneereh	1981	26	Home	Brother/Sister-in-Law	Rah-e Kargar
Mojdeh	1982	19	Home	_	Fadayi-Min.

Note. Min. represents Minority and Maj. represents Majority.

and where women were viewed as "incomplete and dependent" and their bodies were
believed to "allure one toward sin" (Seif, 2003, p. 1), violence against women was not
only inevitable, but it was also approved by a divine authority.

The violent treatment of women activists, as exemplified in Mina's narrative, was on the continuum of and in consistence with the war, which the regime had started against Iranian women. The difference was that perhaps the outspoken and audacious women of the opposition were not only a threat to the political stability of the regime, but a indisputable danger to the Islamic ideology and rhetoric, which was to replace any secular and modern ideologies in Iran. The end result was that the women activists suffered two types of oppression, one for having ideas subversive to that of the regime's, the other solely due to their gender.

Unremitting Torture

Unremitting torture was a subcategory emerging from the themes, system of interrogation, field trial/inquisition, imprisonment and the Islamic Republic's prison system, condition of release, and massacre of 1988, all of which explained the quality of the participants' encounters with the Islamic Republic, from the time of interrogation until their release. This subcategory was the depiction of state sponsored violence and use of systematic torture that permeated throughout the regime, whose aim was to demolish its opposition through physical extermination or psychological brainwash.

This is how Moneereh talked about the unremitting nature of torture in the prisons of the Islamic Republic of Iran. She explained:

> ... I alluded to the fact that the aim of torture in the prisons of Islamic Republic was beyond getting information. The main goal was to breakdown the prisoner and to mold him/her into the shape of a repentant; meaning, they had a template, which you would spit on your entire past, your identity, and become something else, something they wanted you to be. And during the entire imprisonment period, this torture continued to exist in various forms; and of course I have to say that this torture would *intensify* for those like us who would *resist*; it would be applied in more extreme forms... well, it's too much to tell all the events for the

nine years, I'll give an example of one that is salient. In 1984, the prisoners who would not follow the rules, now, what were the rules? Well every prison has certain rules, this is clear. All over the world, the prisoner has to accept certain rules whether or not she likes it, but the rules that were inside the IR's prisons were beyond the rules, which one imagines for a prison... here the rules are about how to change the prisoner ideologically, ... meaning transforming... they implement so many programs in the prison, lectures, prayers, group Namazes, ideological classes and Islamic teachings, so that what would they do? ... change the individuals. And then, in the process of these ideological classes and so forth, they would restrict the contact among the prisoners so much that they would become alienated with self and others, feel isolated, feel defeated, shattered, humiliated. ... so that these trainings and teachings could have their influences... we wouldn't submit to these mandatory classes, or to the relationships they wanted to force on us to stay away from each other, not talk to one another, and become alienated. They punished us even more... making us remain standing up... beating us, or forcing us into small spaces, in large numbers, where there was only room for sitting and not lying down and after all that, they took us to places to which I refer to as boxes or coffins in my book.

In the above passage, Moneereh described conditions aimed at destruction of the self. She stated that alienation from self and others would occur under these chronic and severe circumstances. This alienation from self, within the context of imprisonment, meant to deny one's convictions and denounce self and others, to confess to one's sins, and to take on the ideology of the regime.

Herman (1997) held that prolonged captivity, most often than not, produces alterations in the victim's identity. She further explained that an intense anger, which is aimed at the captor but cannot be expressed for survival reasons, turns inward and manifests itself in depression in the victim. Victims of prolonged, repeated trauma, Herman suggested, develop "an insidious progressive form of post-traumatic stress that invades and encodes the personality" (p. 86). She also indicated that continual hypervigilance, anxiety and agitation, a profound alterations in relationships, and a habitual narrowing in the range of initiative are others symptoms of prolonged captivity.

In his study of Nazi prison and concentration camp survivors living in Norway and Israel, Eitinger (1975) found that most survivors had one or more major symptoms of the 'concentration camp syndrome,' which was characterized by anxiety, sleep disturbances, and an array of psychosomatic symptoms. Beebe (1975) proposed two types of injury: one was somatic and essentially short-term, caused by malnutrition, infection, and physical injury; the other was psychological and essentially permanent.

Suedfeld (1990) indicated similar conditions, as reported by Moneereh, to have existed in the Chinese Prisons of War camps in the 1950s (p. 6). He stated that the Chinese government began combining punishment and incapacitation with indoctrination in his campaign for 'thought reform' (p. 7). These procedures, later applied in a much less intense form to the prisoners of war (POWs), included humiliation, degradation, uncertainty, physical deprivation, group pressure including intensive criticism and self-criticism sessions, dehumanization, threats of execution or indefinite captivity, threats against loved ones, and deprivation of psychological comforts such as privacy, mail, and contact with neutral or friendly others. Suefeld suggested while such treatment often resulted in the prisoners' act in accordance with the captors' wishes, it did not necessarily bring about real conversion. In case of the Western prisoners, for example, the conversion tended to last only until they were released and send home, or at most for a short while following that.

System of interrogation. The participants talked about the system of interrogation as an approach aiming at confusing the prisoner, breaking down his/her defenses through

intimidation and the use of systematic torture in the service of gathering information.

Mehdi talked about the effects of isolation on the prisoner during this period:

> They would bring every one here first, get all the information. They would empty you of information, so to speak; when they had turned you into dross, according to their interpretation they would say individuals had to become dross here, their juice must be drained out of them, then they would send you to serve your sentence. This was the Intelligence Ministry's system. The interrogation system is such that all the while you have information, meaning, they think you have information while you may not, there's no way they would pair you up with another person in one place. Meaning, they will always keep you by yourself for the sake of easily becoming drained; becoming empty of information always takes place in isolation. When you're in solitary, you can have two kinds of responses... especially when you're there for months... a lot of the guys would rehearse what they had in their minds... or think about their wives and their children... this was positive for some, but for some, it was negative... an individual could think about his/her spouse and child and conclude that he/she must get out of here as soon as possible. Would start making up excuses and try to say things that are less detrimental. It starts from here first, and then, he/she trusts... When you trust the secret police, he is aiming at, meaning the relationship between you trying to give as little as possible, he trying to get as much information as possible is disturbed. Now, you're giving some information, he tries to drain you, and now he's no longer just concerned about the intelligence issues, meaning his attempt is at not letting you leave here as a person, if you left here someday; not going out as a human being; for example, if you were a good father for your child, you would no longer be, or if you were a good husband or a good spouse, you would no longer be.

The participants also described interrogation as an occurrence and a period during which the victims not only had to await their own torture, but they also had to bear witness to the torture of others, an experience that would intensify their trauma. The following is Moneereh's accounts of her transfer to Evin[12] prison 20 days after she was first arrested and hours before her first interrogation:

> ... After about 20 days they took us to Evin. Evin was the real hell; I had heard a lot about torture, read about it, knew about it, but what I saw could not fit in my imagination.... The first thing I saw there was wounded bodies, bloody, broken

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[12] Evin is one the prisons in Tehran, which was built during the Pahlavi rule, and has traditionally kept political prisoners. Some other prisons experienced by the participants in this study were: Ghezel Hessar in Tehran, Gohar Dasht in Karaj, in the outskirts of Tehran, Karoon, in Ahvaz, and Toheed in Hamedon.

heads, broken legs, wounded feet, all bandaged, whimper, cry, and then the sound of nonstop lashing from different rooms, then the sound of interrogators' hollers: 'Talk'.... We had arrived at about noon, ... The clock turned 9 pm, I, we had blindfolds on in the rooms too, but I still felt that everything went dark... completely, absolute darkness, and then suddenly the sound of stomping feet filled the corridor in which we were, the corridor of the interrogation rooms. It was the guards and the interrogators who were stomping their feet on the floor all at once... It was making a very horrifying sound; and then, they were screaming with all their body, their throat, slogans against us, against the prisoners, against the communists, against the Mojaheds, against the 'hypocrites' and in favor of executions.... and well it was a very extraordinary fear; it was a fear I can't compare with normal fear... meaning, you think for a moment that the marching that's full of hate, this shouting, they can tear you up, literally tear all of us up. And in reality they didn't tear us up at that moment, but it was to create an atmosphere of fright so that we would realize where we were; they consciously wanted to create this fear. Then I had to sit in this hallway for 4-5 days and witness the torture of others through hearing. We had blindfolds on, and if you were to pull up your blindfold a little bit, what you could see were wounded feet, wounded heads, and through listening you could hear everything, everything that was happening there; and they would even die, I mean, we heard individuals who died under torture. And then, you experience all of these with the hope, hope, not hope, with the anticipation that you yourself also... very soon is your turn; meaning you'll go into one of these rooms, and after 5 days it happened, and I went.

Mehdi also talked about the prolongation of this period and the dynamics involved in this phase, which make the entire experience, even the waiting period, a challenge. Although Mehdi's experience during the interrogation period was not the longest described by the participants, it shed light on the degrees of dehumanization experienced in regards to the most basic human needs:

> ... Yes, I think two months, I was held in the corridor for about two months... they give you a blindfold, put an army blanket underneath you and give you one to cover yourself with. They give you food and take you to the bathroom three times, at the times of Namaz[13].... Any way there is some humor in this too, we had become just like Pavlov's conditioned animals; with the sound of Azon[14] we knew we had to go to the bathroom... Then, well the time for Azon changes in

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[13] Muslims pray five times in the course of the day. This special prayer, one of the pillars of Islam, is called Namaz.

[14] Calling Muslims for Namaz, Azon is voiced at each mosque and is broadcasted from the radio and television before each Namaz time.

relation to when the sun sets; the times weren't fixed; this meant you had to constantly adjust yourself with the time of Azon.

While the previous accounts depicted the periods leading to the interrogation, the following described the process of interrogation, aimed at breaking down the prisoner, who either must repent or be destroyed. This was how Mojdeh talked about this phenomenon:

> ... They lashed me once at night, once in the morning. It was night when they took me, but they were beating a number of guys in front of me for hours, and I had to stand there facing the wall while blindfolded and wearing a chador, witnessing their torture, and this was extremely horrifying; meaning, there were really moments when I wished that they would release those guys and tie me down instead. Because it is really unbearable when they beat someone up in front of you like that... they would lash him and ask, 'what about that person? You filthy, you still say my spouse'... they were in a group in which husband and wife live together and so forth; he would say, 'what can I do, I'm used to saying that'... they were continuously beating him; then, they had gotten some information from him, but they were still lashing him, saying: 'say it, say that you had sexual relations with your teammate, group mate.' He would constantly say: 'I didn't,' they would continuously lash him and say: 'say you did.' Then, I was realizing that the issue is no longer about getting information; they have gotten the information, they now want to drag you into everything... they want to drag into: yes, everything, everything would be scrutinized... I don't know how many hours passed, but they brought about seven – eight individuals for lashing and took them away... then, it was my turn... he told me to lie on the bed facing down... I had no concept of torture... he tied my ankles to the two ends of the bed with a wire and my hands also like this. Then, he said when you wanted to say something, make a fist with your hands like this... we want two things from you: first your appointments, then addresses, then phone numbers... from so and so and so and so, then if not, anyone else's information you have...

Ideological interrogation as described by Bijan demonstrated yet another systematic method used during interrogation:

> ... This situation took one month, meaning this physical pressure, the physical and psychological torture... after one month, they came and said get ready, you are going somewhere else; you're going to Sepah... they had an agenda for me; they took me and confronted me with a couple of the guys who had repented... of course, repenting in the Islamic Republic's system has a vast meaning... anyhow, they were repentant and were trying to justify their actions... they would take me there so that these guys would speak to me. By the way, I knew these guys really, out there, they were good kids, now... anyway they tried to influence me, which

in reality they did; meaning, I became very irritated about why these guys... because I liked them a lot, they were good kids, I said why did they become like this, what a pity. But at any rate, for that one month in the Sepah, it was rarely that they took me for beatings, very rarely... they were mostly doing ideological work; meaning there was continuous talking, day and night, night and day, discussions, talks and so forth, which this in itself at times had more severe effects than physical torture. I mean they were putting so much pressure on me that I was wishing that they would leave me alone and instead torture me physically... because the brain essentially looses its ability to remain balanced, since they are talking in your ears day and night, night and day, nonstop. They talk constantly; talk, talk, talk, and you have no chance to defend. The brain loses its control; the brain doesn't have the ability to concentrate so that it could put itself back together. The only thing that could really keep me on my feet was those parts of my convictions, in which I believed with no reservations.

The period of interrogation in the Islamic Republic's prison was long-drawn-out, and not just in the service of gathering information. Even long after information was taken from the prisoner, torture, this inseparable partner of interrogation, continued. This "expression of the will of God," which has its place in the Iran's Islamic Constitution was employed to punish the "crimes of the mind, crimes of attitude, belief, and opinion" (Millett, 1994, pp. 280-287). Ideological torture, like other forms of torture used by the regime, was systematic, prolonged, and in the service of modifying and reshaping the prisoners' identities and ideologies. The impact of such practices was confusion, disorientation, and agitation. It was within this context, which involved inescapability and uncontrollability, that Bijan was able to exert some perceived control by relying on his ideology and belief system in order to keep his sanity and remain resistant.

Field trial/inquisition. The right to a fair trial was not the description offered by the participants when talking about their court hearings. They unanimously described their hearings to have been as short as a few minutes, during which they did not have any

lawyer present, were questioned by a clergyman, and were sentenced for vague and often fabricated charges. Effat explained the circumstances during her trail:

> I had two trials; my first trial was after 18 months of interrogation... the law says after two months, one month, three months, the individual's status must be determined and she/he must go to trial and receive sentencing, but the Islamic Republic would not follow any of these laws...I was under interrogation for 18 months; of course, I can say we were always under interrogation in Evin... meaning, it was never like this that now this is prison and interrogation is over... one day they called me and said you have court... we were blindfolded... in court, I saw there was a clergy sitting there. He said to push up my blindfold... I saw he had prepared a list, like a murderer; ... I saw a series of charges, not based on what I had said, based on whatever is there, they told me this that and that... 'do you have any thing to say in your defense?' I said 'whatever you just said has nothing to do with me; I'm none of what you said, I reject all of it.' There wasn't any attorney or any thing else. 'Do you have any questions?' There are no questions left, what question could I ask? Nothing... 'Put your blindfold on; go.' I think it wasn't even five minutes. This was my trial: a clergy and nothing else...

Effat's second trial was during the massacre of 1988 when all prisoners underwent an "inquisition." During these trials, while female Mojahedin were sentenced to executions, female leftists were sentenced to whippings until they gave in and accepted to do Namaz. This was how Effat described her experience:

> I can say my second trail was like a field trail. It was the 1988 trials, which was the massacre of political prisoners, they were taking us to court for Namaz. And in this court there were five people, most of which were the infamous torturers of that era and the clergy... There they asked me 'your name, your last name, are you a Muslim?' 'My father is a Muslim,' my answer. 'Do you practice Namaz?' 'No I don't.' 'Do you believe in your organization?' 'Yes I do.' 'What organization are you from?' 'The Fadayi Majority, yes I believe in it.' That's it. These were the questions. 'You are sentenced to receiving lashing five times a day for Namaz; morning, noon, night'... they announced, and I announced 'I'm going on a dry hunger strike.'

Effat's explanation about announcement of her "dry hunger strike" demonstrated her resistance and coping and repudiated the notion of learned helplessness. According to Saporta and van der Kolk (1992) "when there is nothing that the victim can do to

terminate the massive threat to safety, his ability to cope is overwhelmed" (p. 155). These authors also cite Maier and Seligman (1976), stating that "when faced with uncontrollable stress, animals and people develop learned helplessness" (p.155). Under the most uncontrollable, incomprehensible, and traumatizing conditions, however, Effat continued her fight by resorting to resist bowing before the authorities, within a circumstance in which she had no control over her life or death. Her strength was a testimony to the adaptive ability and resilience under most adverse conditions.

Imprisonment and the Islamic Republic's prison system. The participants described imprisonment in the Islamic Republic's (IR) prisons as a constant struggle and an ongoing experience of torture. It was further characterized as a state of constant fear and threat, which resulted in uncontrollable and unpredictable living conditions. The ideological prison, which was extremely crowded, forced individuals to constantly experience inhumane and unbearable situations. Individual expression and the right to privacy were forbidden. Constant relocation and the ever-present possibility of torture and execution created a state of persisting anxiety and self-criticism. The participants also reported that in many instances, the authorities annulled marriages of the leftist prisoners, thereby preventing them from visitation with their spouses. Some aspects of these circumstances were changed after 1985. Mehdi explained the changes in the prison system as the Islamic Republic became more adept at suppressing the nation:

> ... I call the big period of 1982 to 1985 one era. The reason for this is that the climax of the killings and extermination happened during those years; its end point is 1986 when Haj Davood Rahmani from the directorship of Ghezel Hessar, and Ladjevardi from the directorship of Evin and the Revolutionary Court were put to the side. Meaning, in reality their responsibilities for this period is done. During this, a number of changes are taking place in the society, for example

returning to the world society and so forth; meaning this returning to the world's large family and the issue of human rights had become emphasized. The first period is from 1979 to 1982, then from 1982 to 1985, and the period, which is very important because of the massacre of 1988, is the period of 1985 to 1988. The system during the first period is the system of inconsistency, then is the period of, the era of becoming systematic. We know that in the year 1984, the Ministry of Intelligence is established; meaning, in 1982 and a few years after the revolution it was such that the arrests, interrogations, and all the steps in imprisoning the conscience so to speak and crushing human dignity and so forth, was done by the Prosecutor's team... in 1984, when the Ministry of Intelligence is established, this becomes the responsibility of the Ministry of Intelligence. And well, they would operate differently... this is the period of gradual opening of the prison atmosphere; meaning, the era of injected half ass democracy that they injected from up high.

Four of the participants, Effat, Moneereh, Hormoz, and Amir had prior arrests during the Shah's era while Mina was arrested briefly on June 20th and released, before she was arrested again six months later. Moneereh, Hormoz, and Amir had served sentences from six-months to a few years long in the Shah's prisons. All of the participants distinguished the dehumanizing treatments in the Islamic Republic's prisons from that of the prisons under the Shah's regime. Those who had experienced both prisons firsthand, attested that while certain tortures during interrogation were the same under both regimes, during the Shah's era, the use of systematic torture would stop with the end of interrogation; whereas, torture was an ongoing phenomenon for the duration of imprisonment in the IR's prisons. This was part of Moneereh's description of Islamic Republic's prisons:

> ... This was the torture during my interrogation, but it didn't mean that it had ended. Torture was always present, physical and psychological; especially, psychological torture was during the entire nine years, in order to break you down. Meaning, torture is no longer only in the service of getting information. Of course, this is the general nature of prison and torture that it doesn't only want information but it wants to break the opponent, but in ideological prisons and Islamic prison, Islamic Republic, torture was very much more significant than in the Shah's, which I had experienced myself... for example, in our ward if

anyone's husband was executed, she couldn't come and cry in the ward because they would say her husband was a kafar or monafeq and his execution is a blessing. And even crying, which is a simple and basic response, was taken away from you... you not only couldn't curse, but you had to also say this was a blessing; they wanted from you to repeat this...

Mina's description of the crowded cells and dehumanizing conditions in which she and other prisoners were kept is presented in the following excerpt:

The period of 1982 was an extremely difficult and painful period for me because in fact, we couldn't see with our eyes, we could hear with our ears that they would take away our friends, our comrades and hang them... It was the period of interrogation, which was very hard because they are taking information from you, they want to empty you of information ... It is a very hard period, meaning, a period when you feel prisons are full and there's no place, in terms of law, they don't give you the least of rights: You are an anti-revolutionary, you are a wicked person, you have to become a 'human being,' be punished. They've brought you here, then, as much as it's possible for them, they have thrown ninety people in a room of twenty-five, thirty-meter [17' x 17'] ... I can portray one day...you had to spend for hours to get a bathroom turn, and what was really difficult was sleeping time. In each room, ninety people had to sleep... there's space for one shoulder... approximately ten centimeters [4"] for each person ... without pillows, nothing, we had nothing... we had to sleep in four rows; two rows would put their heads to the wall, the two middle rows head to head, with legs up to their waists. Everyone would go into each other... then sometimes there was no space; some would sleep on one shoulder and some had to just sit...

The frequent attacks by hooded individuals, the unsanitary prison conditions, the ideological character of the prison and its deliberate acts of brain washing made every day living conditions filled with horror, unpredictability, and instability. The prisoners were deprived of the most basic rights. They were told, in many ways, that all of their attempts to resist the Islamic government were useless. To keeps one's identity was a challenge to reckon with everyday. Mojdeh explained:

... Everything was prohibited ... anything that would give you some relief from that atmosphere would become prohibited, for example solving crosswords was a sign that you believe in your convictions, why? Because you are thinking about something else, or I don't know, doing hand craft is all prohibited; it was all a

crime... for example every morning they would have exercises, while we were thirsty for exercising, because exercising was prohibited... if anyone would exercise it was a sign that she believed in her convictions, but they, the repentant, had group exercises, but although we were thirsty for exercise, we wouldn't go to exercise with them... for example you imagine, early morning they would get up in the yard, you had to wake up with their slogans of 'good morning Pasdar, good morning brother'... these were essentially extreme forms of psychological torture, having to wake up to this every morning... essentially you couldn't be yourself for one moment, you couldn't have a moment to yourself, in your sleep and everything else; meaning, they would take away your smallest individual thing, individual not issue of individual vs. group, it means something you feel it's yours, not belongings, meaning the atmosphere... everything had to be attacked, everything had to be raped; from their television programs that you had to sit and watch, well, we would try to sleep; they would report that they're sleeping; it was a crime to sleep in the class for example... or for example we couldn't talk easily because they would read our lips, everything... from this to the prayers they would constantly broadcast from the microphones...

Condition of release. This theme was the illustrator of the pressure put upon prisoners to give up their convictions and to sell their beliefs for the price of their freedom. However, for the participants, and many others they talked about in their stories, giving in to the conditions of release for the sake of their freedom from prison meant more than an arbitrary decision; for many, it meant stepping over their human dignity and becoming one of the enemy, who was holding a nation hostage.

Mehdi dealt with this psychological pressure a number of times during his imprisonment. His accounts exemplified the intensity of this routine dehumanizing technique and the amount of strength it required to withstand such force. His story also elucidated the fact that not only the prisoners but also their families were distressed by such treatment:

> ... I had accepted that I had to stay here for the duration of the sentence they had given me. Well, they had also taken me a few times for, meaning, for instance, said the condition of my release was giving a television interview. I remember, in 1986, my mother had tried to see a lot of people, she had thrown herself in front of the office, of the car that belonged to the Prosecutor's Office... it was the

period in which they were freeing a lot of people by getting them to give an interview on television ... The warden, Naserian, sent for me, he had a key role in the executions of '88, ... he asked me 'will you give an interview or not?' The usual questions; I said 'no.' He asked 'why?' I said 'I don't think I've done any thing that I would have to give an interview for it, and since I don't want to do any thing political any more, what you want from me to do is a political act, denouncing organizations and showing my remorse and disgust'... then he said, 'but you know that the condition of your release is interviewing.' I said 'anyway you've given me a sentence with which I don't agree; nevertheless, I will not give an interview.' He said 'push up your blindfold.' I pushed up my blindfold, my mother and oldest brother were sitting in front of me, but he had told them to sit quietly; this was his condition. My mother started to cry. He made me confront my family. He told my mother 'see, you keep going around making noise, throwing yourself in front of the cars, he doesn't want it; they don't want it.' Meaning, he put me completely in front of my family; this was one of the systems they were using. Then, he left us alone. My mother began crying; I had become very agitated that he had made us have to confront each other like this. This is the explanation I gave my mother: I said 'see, you always said you have to have family pride and know were you're coming from [*sar-e sofreye pedar madar bozorg shodan*]. The meaning of what they want me to do is that I don't have family pride and I don't know where I'm coming from. ... They are telling me to come and apologize for the things I haven't done; it is a matter of bringing on shame, and I won't submit to it'.... We separated from our family in bitterness. But he was shutting up the family's mouth; he said they don't want to get out; we want them to go out...

Putting pressure on the families, who wished to see their loved ones released, and portraying the prisoners' at fault for their prolonged imprisonment, the regime aimed at achieving three goals. Its first objective was to create a split between the prisoners and their families, thus eliminating one of the main support systems the activists relied on. Its second objective was to add to the number of repentant prisoners, who would not have a positive view of themselves, and would be rejected by the resistant activists and the society. Lastly, the regime's goal was to stop the objections of the families, which had been taking places ever since the widespread arrests began.

The conditions of release were forced upon the prisoners in many ways, and reached their peak after the massacre of 1988. The executed prisoners had been a

"guarantee" for the survival of the regime. By making interviews a condition of release, the regime was buying yet another warrantee for its existence. It was aware that in those years, succumbing to interviews was seen as a sign of weakness and betrayal both by the public and the prisoners themselves. Its aim was for the prisoners to be so ashamed of their conduct that they would be unable to keep their heads up in society once released. Mehdi explained:

> After the killings, the Prosecutor's Office had seen the situation ripe for putting pressure on every one. They called the guys up for interrogations again after the killings... They took me upstairs for: 'are you willing to cooperate and bring information to us?' I said, 'there's nothing left to want to report or not report on; there's no information left.' He said, 'no, are you willing to become our informant when you get out?' I said, 'I have no connections with ... I want to go out and live a normal life.' 'OK, are you willing to bring us information from inside the prison or not?' ... They took each one of us individually and asked us these questions. You know, use of blades for shaving was prohibited inside prison. During the period we were in Gohardast, there were a number of nonpolitical as well as Afghani prisoners in the ward beneath us. We had made a canal and at times would buy razors from them... I had put a razor in my underwear ... I can't say now if I would have used it or not if it were to come to that because it's stupid to say that now, as Bresht says, people are defined within the circumstance... but at that time, I had decided to use this razor to kill myself if they cornered me to become their informant. It was with me to the end; it was in my underwear until the last moments.

In the above passage, Mehdi approached the issue of resistance and saving his dignity in a realistic and guileless manner. He spoke of self-preservation through suicide. While suicide is commonly viewed as a sign of helplessness, hopelessness, and despair, in this context, it was a conscious action in the service of protection of self and others, hence requiring its examination from an approach, which takes into consideration sociopolitical and cultural aspects of trauma.

The final strategy of the regime for "getting rid of" the resistant prisoners was put into effect in 1990. Since the female prisoners, who were still in prison two years

following the massacre of political prisoners in 1988, had refused to submit to the conditions of release, the Islamic Republic put into operation the program of temporary releases. Through this program, the female prisoners were forced out of the prison and were sent to their families for a limited period, but were to return to prison. The goals of the regime were to breakdown the activists' resistance and to force them to concede defeat by surrendering to the conditions of release. Mojdeh explained how the temporary releases effected her:

> ... after the executions, they tried everything, solitary confinement and every moment they would take us into the atmosphere of execution: ' will take you right now for execution,' and we were really alive from week to week. For example we would say, 'he's said we're not going to be alive by 15th of February, should we wash our blankets, not wash them?' Meaning, we were living day by day... we had to think about death every second. They had killed those guys; they had executed the Mojahedin. We were left. Then, they sent us out, but still told us: 'you're not free; you'll go out; this is your last chance; you'll see the realities; you'll either denounce or will be executed.'... My eight years of imprisonment on one side, this period in which I had come out under those circumstances on one side. Meaning, it was very hard, it was very hard... I can say it was one of the most cutting things that, before that, you are face to face with your enemy; now you had to come and, for example, groups of people would surround you that 'you have to do this.' You had to constantly analyze, constantly explain why you're not doing it, you had to argue why you didn't accept it. Then, you've come next to your family; have slept next to your mother at night, after many years; have felt freedom... then, suddenly they take you back: 'this is temporary, this is temporary, this is temporary;' meaning, that period, especially, we were the first group that came out because the next groups knew coming out is bogus, but we didn't know. For us, they could take us back at any moment, and there was also possibility of executions... but the situation outside was really hard for me because it would require certain strength and motivation for going back inside.

This was how Mitra talked about her experience during that period:

> I was in solitary when this situation began... I had been away, completely, for seven months... then they called me for interrogation; I saw we aren't going to the interrogation building... I got worried... he was going toward the court... I knew the way to that part of Intelligence Ministry... you can tell from under the blindfold where you're going... then, I saw he's put a few forms there and is saying 'your sister is at the door.' Then, you imagine with what looks, big

slippers, which were three times the size of my feet... I can say I was in shock; meaning, I couldn't comprehend that I had come there; then, I said 'but with what conditions? What is this?' ... When I first stepped into the street, I suddenly felt unsafe and I wanted to go back in; just before that, I had thought I was going to court. But I never forget the feeling I had: At first, you think you're going to court, and you don't know at all what's happening; then... when I went out, I didn't see my sister... imagine you've suddenly gone to the street, I felt unsafe; suddenly I returned inside; then I realized that, and told myself 'control yourself.' The outside atmosphere scared me... then my sister came... I quarreled with her 'what have you done? What have you said?' Then she explained. Anyhow, it was for ten days and then it was renewed from that point on.

The above narratives insinuated that prisoners, who did not have family support, or were experiencing family pressure would break down more easily, thus suggesting the role of family support as one of the important aspects of resistance. These accounts further illustrated the regime's awareness of this fact, and showed its use of "psychological warfare" (Martin-Baro, 1996, p. 138) aimed at breaking apart the solidarity between the families and the prisoners. These psychological warfare, which are operations aimed at creating mental changes in the enemy" (Watson, 1978 as cited in Martin-Baro, 1996) were used both inside and outside of the prison, signifying that the trauma of torture and imprisonment within the Iranian context did not only effect the individual prisoners but also their families and communities at large.

Massacre of 1988. This theme emerged as the participants described the continuity of their torment and their constant clash with death while in prison. All the participants referred to the massacre of political prisoners in 1988 as the single most shocking event of their imprisonment period and as an unprecedented act in Iranian history. While they described the regime's routine executions of more than 100 prisoners a day in 1981 as extremely traumatic, the unexpected nature of the 1988 mass executions seemed to have had a more severe effect on the participants. In July 1988, the Mojahedin

prisoners, and two months later, in August, the leftist prisoners were faced with inquisition and executions. While the names of the executed in 1981 had appeared in the daily newspapers, the massacre of '88 took place in complete secrecy. Even the prisoners themselves did not know of the fate, which awaited them. Mehdi's accounts depicted the unpredictability and incomprehensibility of the massacre:

> During the events of 1988 we were the last room, which was right across from the Hosseineh[15] in Gohardasht. We had no idea that the executions were taking place inside the Hosseineh. A few of the guys had bent the metal blinds in one of the rooms; then, we could see some of what was happening there at night, or during the day; for example, we would see a group of guards (Pasdaran) with masks on are disinfecting there. Well every one would say something different. For instance, someone would say they are planting flowers; some, one would for example say they must have bought poisoned meat and are bringing it into the kitchen. Then in response to well, why would they plant flowers, since the visitations were cut off during the executions of 1988, for instance some of the guys would say, this was their analysis, they would say they are killing some of the Mojahedin ... and now they are trying to make things look normal, so they are planting flowers, so that when they invite the families back, it would look like a more pleasant atmosphere. See, they are killing human beings two steps away from us, meaning they are slaughtering in inhumane and Islamic dimensions, again we are there: they are planting flowers. We keep saying the bloodsucking regime, the executioner regime, the oppressive regime, the blood-shedding regime, we keep repeating these; essentially we had used these words so much that some of them had lost their meaning. It means we could not believe that, man, two steps away from us they are killing people, no? This projection, our projection, we couldn't believe it at all.

Within two months, thousands of prisoners nationwide were executed and buried in unmarked mass graves though the regime continued to execute a number of other prisoners in the months following the massacre. The participants referred to this event as a national catastrophe in the modern political history of Iran. Most of those executed were individuals with completed sentences.

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[15] An auditorium used specifically for religious prayers and lectures.

The magnitude of this event's traumatic implications was understood better as the participants described a fairly calm period of prison life, immediately preceding the massacre. This fairly calm period was previously explained under the heading of Prison System. In the following passage, Amir's description of the atmosphere inside the prisons in the period before the massacre is presented:

> ... The issue of the executions was that since 1986 and '87, the prisoners' emotional states had improved because aside from the interrogations period, the period of imprisonment had become easier. They were putting less pressure on, there was less humiliation, or there wasn't much. For example, you would see that they had left us alone for six months, over a small matter. Of course I'm talking about Gohardasht prison... They had good book exhibitions during this period; we were reading good books... the Mojahedin had sent guidance to their inside prison members that this regime is falling soon, and you can become firmer in your responses... On the other hand, committees sent by Montazeri had come into the prisons to look at the prisoners' conditions... the leftists had improved emotionally, and were standing firmer and more obviously; meaning, they always took us every six months for questioning... 'what do you think about your organization? What's your opinion about the war? ... Would you denounce your organization?' We had always said no, no, no... but those who weren't responding this way before, gradually began to answer like this... the prisoners would strike: 'why did you give us the newspapers late' ... they [warden/guards] weren't responding too harshly, they weren't giving the repentant-making respond, so to speak... so the general atmosphere was that the prisoners were in good spirit and were constantly opposing; they would beat them up, the prisoners would show resistance, and no one would give in... The regime did something that no one was predicting; meaning it executed, murdered many... It was under this circumstances that they suddenly came and took away our television; used to give us newspapers, didn't give us anymore... cut out our visitations... The analysis began...this is unprecedented; they would do this, but we would know they want to punish us; but we hadn't done anything so that they would want to punish us for it. No matter how much we thought, we couldn't reach any conclusions. There was a Pasdar who would bring us food. We asked him, why is it like this... he would just say I don't know. Oh by the way, they weren't taking us to the doctor anymore either...

Effat's portrayal of the horrifying images of uncontrollability during her trials, which was typical of leftist women's trials during the 1988 mass killing, were previously presented in this chapter under the heading of field trial/inquisition. Here, Amir's

accounts of the trials during this period are presented to illustrate how many of the male prisoners were unaware that they were going through retrials for re-sentencing, and were going to be sent to the execution squads. He portrayed the horrors of unpredictability, uncontrollability, and confusion during that period:

> ... We suddenly saw that they called some names: 'put on your blindfolds and come out'... we went out and saw, yes, everyone's sitting there blindfolded, from one end to another, in the main corridor; 300, 500, can't say how many... Lashkary or Naserian would come and ask you a few questions and go. They asked me too: 'what is your charge?' they wouldn't say to what organization you belong, they would say your charge; well, 'Majority;' 'do you believe in them?' just like this, very short and sweet... 'Will you give an interview?' 'No, I won't;' 'OK, sit down' he would say come and stand here; separated us... I saw now everyone of us in this lane had to enter a room... I saw that every five minutes, a person would come out of that room, and would stand either on the right or on the left... I heard Naserian saying, take this one and whip him... when they want to release, they would put on pressure; they didn't want to say we released you, they wanted to say you gave in, you accepted the Islamic Republic, you don't agree with your organization, you surrendered, we felt sorry and released you. Well this is very important. Because you leave here as a crushed individual; when you go out, you can't hold your head up and say Islamic Republic is not good, or be able to tell four people about what was happening inside here... Then, my analysis became this: they want to put pressure on some of the veteran activist and interview them, and essentially release the rest with them... I asked the guy next to me 'why do you think they've brought us here?' He said 'nothing important; it's the usual quizzes.' ... They took me into a room... three people were sitting there; one was Nayerri, one of them was Eshraghi... the Revolutionary Court's head Prosecutor. Eshraghi said 'we are a committee that's come to evaluate the circumstances in the prisons; we have a few questions'... He said 'will you do Namaz?' I said 'no'...They took us to a room, and began to beat us up. I had never seen anything like it because it was very violent... See, they would take a metal pipe and hit you over the head with it, or would smack your ear with a shoe, pull out your beard, I don't know, strange things. A number of Pasrdars would mob attack you, bring you up to the air and slam you down... the head and face were all bloody. And then, they threw us into a room and said nothing... it was as if an earthquake had struck. We had been serving our sentences quietly; we had nothing to do with these things. It was extremely sudden. Then, I saw one of the guys was crying... I went next to him and said 'why are you crying, so they're beating us up; it's always like this.' He said 'it's not this; I'm upset about something else... they're killing.' I asked 'who are they killing?' he said ' the Mojahedin; they killed all the Mojahedin in the last month, and they're going to kill Parviz.' Parviz was his brother. I asked 'why would they kill the Mojahedin?' he looked around him and said 'I saw.' I said 'you saw?' he said 'Ya, we were in

the opposite cell where they were throwing the bodies into trucks; I saw, and I heard their trial too. I asked 'how was it; did you see? He said 'this, where do you think we went?' I said 'I don't know; they asked me questions.' He said 'that's the court; they determine here if you'll be executed or not.'... We stayed there for a few minutes, then, we saw that a few people, who had been there before, had carved their names on the radiator; and they were the Mojahedin... then underneath it was written 'there's a great possibility that we will be executed.'... Then, the issue of execution became definite for us...A few minutes later they asked us to go out... we went out and saw a couple of my friends, they had separated us from each other... I saw one side of his mustaches is missing and his lip is jumping up and down; he's gotten a tic... we had been eating lunch together four hours before that; I was seeing from under my blindfold... I said 'why are you doing this? Why is your lip shaking?'... He said 'they beat you until you do it' I said 'do what?' he said 'Namaz.'... We went and saw that it was a battlefield in this main corridor of Gohardasht. They've put a number of beds there, Lashkari has a T-shirt on, and he's sweated so much because of whipping; he has a lash in his hand and is walking like this, saying 'come on, those who don't do it, come on,' like thugs. I got there, he asked 'will you do it or not?' I said 'what will I do or not?'... he said 'Namaz' I said 'no' he said 'lie down.' He started lashing. He said 'I'll hit you until you tell me you'll do it, any time you want to do it, raise your finger.' He hit and hit, until I saw he untied me himself... as soon as he brought me down, ... they made us run, threw us to the side, pass us to each other like a football... they wanted to hit us again; we said we'll do it. Imagine, there was someone with me who had been in prison for seven years, had gone through more hardship than this and had refused to do Namaz; he had resisted when Haj Davood had taken him to the coffins, but there was something added here to all of that. This wasn't the issue of execution of one or two people; we saw he said they've killed all of the Mojahedin and I saw they are killing our people too... we weren't able to analyze it. It was a psychological thing. Anyhow, he had resisted now after two lashes he had said OK I'll do it. It was very hard for him to accept, or I was going crazy myself... they took us to vozo[16], the reason I'm saying all of this is that I want you to see some of these emotional scenes, ... he said 'brothers, look to see how I vozo, those who don't know how to, learn.'... I was really feeling ... for example a poor young girl has been ganged raped, then, her hair has been disheveled, and I don't know, she's in bad condition, broken. Then, one of those guys comes and for instance strokes and organizes her hair and says get ready because we're going out... anyhow, this humiliation here was very deadly.

Moneereh's accounts of this massacre showed another side of this

traumatizing experience:

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[16] Preparation for Namaz by washing certain parts of the body such as arms, face and feet.

I gave you examples of tortures, and then we go back to the total experience of this period, especially experience of '88, which is coming face-to-face with death. You definitely know about the events of summer of '88, with the end of war between Iran and Iraq, meaning with acceptance of the UN Security Council's 598 resolution[17] by Khomeini, a vast killing of the political prisoners begins... this is in reality an embarrassing defeat. This massacre of 1988 is an ideological massacre. What does this mean? It means that they kill the prisoners, without it having anything to do with their type of charges... because these were all prisoners who had been already tried and were given specific sentences and many of them had to be released... they kill more of the male prisoners... they also kill a lot of the female Mojahedin prisoners, those of whom weren't repentant. But, they don't kill the leftist women, but give them lashing regimens. Because in the Islamic law, the punishment for the atheist woman is lashing, daily lashing at each Namaz time until she dies or repents and believes in Islam... of course we also had some dead; we had individuals who committed suicide while the whippings were going on... we didn't know what was happening; we only became aware of the pinnacle of the catastrophe at the end of this period... but because of the atmosphere that was created, one could guess there was a disaster in the making... when the whippings began... they had separated them from us... I'm saying this without exaggeration that you, at any moment, you may not exist anymore; ... you may not be tomorrow; meaning this was a tight struggle, tight struggle with death.

Not only because of the horrific events it entailed, but also because of its utterly unpredictable nature, all participants spoke of the massacre of 1988. According to the participants, the Islamic Republic had been successful in its implementation of a relatively less restricted phase inside of the prisons, thereby providing a period of "illusory calm" in the years immediately preceding the massacre. It was during this time that the prisoners began focusing on the every day affairs of the prison such as "who was to lead the exercises of the day," as well, they began to voice their objections to the authorities about various issue concerning prison life.

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[17] Based on this resolution, Iran had to end the war while parts of Iran was still in the hands of Iraqis. Before this, Khomeini had always said that he would not stop fighting until conquest of Karbala, an important Muslim holly city in Iraq, and the overthrow of Sadam.

Once more the Islamic Republic ambushed the activists, and in their disbelief, it showed its nature in the most horrifying dimensions. For the regime, the need to stay in power once again put the extermination of the opposition on the agenda. The final act was to complete their physical extermination, which had begun seven years earlier. The devaluation of lives, and the dehumanization of the "enemy" justified their horrific actions. These experiences illustrated the persistent and pervasive nature of the horror endured by the participants.

Types of Torture

This was a sub-category that delineated various systematic techniques used by the Islamic Republic to torment and suppress the prisoners. The participants described these techniques to have been used to extract confessions from the prisoners or as calculated moves to punish resistant individuals. While it was previously explained that the entire imprisonment in the Islamic Republic's prisons was referred to as a torturous experience, current theme entailed specific and decisive techniques. These types included psychological torture, joint physical and psychological torture, physical torture, passive imposition of pain, and fear induction. Table 6 contains examples of torture techniques named by the participants in their interviews.

Psychological torture. Through this systematic technique, physical pain or discomfort was minimal or incidental, and the emphasis was on mental effects. Among such tortures, the participants gave descriptions of deprivation from identity, dehumanization, deprivation from visitation, humiliation, constant use of blindfold, and

many other psychological tortures as presented in Table 6. In regard to various types of torture I asked Mina, "What kind of other tortures had you experienced yourself?" She chose to talk about the constant relocation she had experienced during her imprisonment. This was how she talked about this psychological torture:

> It wasn't physical... it's the relocation of cellblocks, which I can't at all count now how many times I was relocated from cellblock to cellblock, ward to ward, prison to prison, room to room... you never adjust; meaning in the Islamic Republic's prison, in the duration I was there, they would not let you adjust to any place and become stable... be able to start your life. For example, they want to keep you for twenty years, they want you to be there for life... you can still gain something here in prison, from the books or newspapers that are censored, or from the stable relationships or belongings that you have... they know that, and so, they keep you in a roaming state; you're not settled anywhere, and you feel like an anticipating solider, whom will be either called in an hour, or in ten days. They have no steady place for you. Its psychological effect is that, I can only say, those who had a more stable place in prison were harmed less. Those of us who were constantly roaming were traumatized in many ways, psychologically, emotionally.

Physical torture. By way of this method of torture, pain was actively imposed. The participants referred to this as the most commonly used method of torture both during interrogation and for punishment in response to resistance. While sudden attacks by a mob when blindfolded, routine smacking, kicking, and dragging by the hair were reported to be common practices, whipping or flogging of the feet was reported to be the most common and the worst form of systematic physical torture used by the Islamic Republic torturers. Mehdi stated:

> ... I remember the first time they lied me down on the bed to whip me, ... he said: 'look, every prisoner's tongue is in the bottom of his feet, and we take out that tongue from that place.' ... They want to get information, meaning take words out of the prisoner's tongue, which is in the bottom of his feet. When they flog, it swells up, there were combs they would drag over your feet. This would shock you at once. If you wouldn't go into shock, it would mean that your feet had become numb; it wouldn't be worth it; they'd stop. They'd stop and would make

you march in place over your wounds... so that blood would flow and they would be able to whip you again and induce pain...

Mojdeh talked about her experience of physical torture in the following passage:

> ... They whipped me for a while, and I kept repeating the same thing I had said before: 'I don't know them' and so forth. I don't know how many times they lashed me ... but that first lashing that you receive, you suddenly see the whole world is ended for you; meaning it felt like this for me that with the first lashing of my feet, I said it's over, life is over. Meaning, it's like the end of the world. I don't know what role the first lashing plays, but the person says goodbye to everything with this first lashing...

Joint physical and psychological torture. These presented examples of physical maltreatment that had a more salient component of mental anguish. Some examples of such tortures offered by the participants included putting prisoners in complete darkness or in intensely lit cells, deliberately allowing sewer rats to have access to the solitary cells, withholding medical treatment, sleep deprivation, and putting prisoners in cells as small as 2 meters by 1 and 1/2 meters long, alone or with prisoners who had become insane.

Mina, as a female prisoner, had experienced some of the most horrifying systematic tortures used to breakdown the integrity of the activists. This was how she described one of her many torturous experiences:

> Exactly one year after my arrest... they took us to, I went to Gohardasht... when we arrived, he came and said, they were sending each one us into a cell, and were putting our belongings behind the door; they said 'go inside and take off all of your clothes.' At first when we got there they said ' we will shut your voices up here, this isn't like Ghezel Hessar where you could object.'... She brought me into a cell, because I couldn't see, she said 'get naked.' I said what do you mean 'get naked;' then, I thought about a thousand and one things this could be about. She left; there was no place to sit down, I was just standing there, with chador and blindfolded... I took off my shirt, and my pants... She came in and pushed my chador aside... she said 'your underwear too; you'll take off everything even your underwear; wait for me in your chador and blindfold.' Then, she came back two,

three hours later; then, I didn't know that this was a form of resistance in her view, she came and pushed my chador aside and saw I had my underwear on; she became angry and pulled my underwear down in a very disgusting way. When I objected, meaning, they have raised you with the culture that you have to safeguard your body... I said 'what are you doing?' she said 'oh, you're objecting?' I said 'well, if you want to search me, why like this?' ... She went out and said, 'Hajagha[18], she doesn't know were she is; she thinks she's come to a wedding'... as she's searching my bag, I'm wearing my blouse, my pants; may be she's told me to get dressed, I don't remember at all... in the solitary confinement, approximately 2.70 meters by 1.70 meters [9'x 5.6'], which I couldn't lie down this way, my head would hit the wall... The lights were on day and night... there was no connection with anyone, with every noise they would open the door and beat you up... you're deprived from the most basic things; one time the water was running from the faucet, he opened the door and told me everything he pleased; he said 'you gain strength from the sound of water.'... This torture in this form, in which you have no connection with anyone, there's complete silence... when they cut off all of your connections, it's like wanting you not to benefit from anyone, not to say anything. I had forgotten my own voice, tone of my own voice... I was upset because of it... at last, I filled the aftabeh[19] with water and started to sing in it... this would give me mental strength...

According to Walsh (1998), "to be resilient, we need to take stock of our situation-ourchallenges, constraints, and resources-and then focus on making the most of our options" (p. 67). The above narrative illustrated an example of resourcefulness, challenging the notion of learned helplessness under uncontrollable conditions (Saporta & van der Kolk, 1992, p. 155). Uncontrollability in Mina's situation was defined by the reality that making any sound in the solitary confinement was met by violent punishment. Mina's response, however, was not inaction and helplessness; instead, she exhibited her resilience by pulling from her resources and conceiving of what was possible under those circumstances. In the absence of external resources and group support, Mina drew on her

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[18] Muslims, who go through the pilgrimage to Mecca, are referred to as Hajagha (male), or Hajkhanom (female) upon the completion of this holly journey. This holly pilgrimage is called Haj.

[19] An ewer with a long spout used for cleansing of the lower part of the body after using the bathroom.

internal resources and found a way to resist the chronically destructive intentions of her tormentors.

Passive imposition of pain. Passive imposition of pain was a method of systematic torture through which pain was inflicted in inactive ways, for example, through the use of handcuffs [*ghapan*] while the prisoner's wrists were forced together in the back and from two different directions. Amir described his experience with this form of torture in the following excerpt:

> ... By suspension I mean sleeplessness, keeping you awake, and that's really crazy making. They hook the person's hand up to something, I don't know, for example there was a door there. From one end to the other, not only me, all those who were there, you could see from under your blindfold, then, of course your feet have been lashed before and are inflamed and wounded; then, you are like that for a few days. Because you can't, you can't sleep, because when you want to sleep, they've cuffed your hands with a handcuff, as soon as your body becomes a bit lax, it puts on pressure, this pain wakes you up, you stand erect again. It continues like this. Well, at first I was looking at this wishing they would suspend me instead of laying me on the bed for lashing. Then, [laughs] after they suspended me, I saw it isn't that easy because you are standing for one hour, two hours, three hours, well the entire day. You see, the whole day is a lot, then you fall asleep, but you can't sleep. One day, two days, the third day the person starts to become delirious, not knowing whether he's asleep or wake. He's asleep while he's not. It is really bad. Then, by the way, also in the hallway, there was a large hallway like this, the interrogation rooms were on that side, in this side the suspended, also on the floor every one sitting facing the wall or blindfolded and with their backs to the wall. Man..., there is blood all over the floor, and they would constantly play Ahangaran's[20] voice, his song, loud, either the Koran or Ahangaran's tape or prayers, the Komale prayer, and I don't know the Nodbeh prayer and so forth. If we go into the meaning of these prayers they are all: I regret, I'm contemptible, I'm a sinner and so on; especially the Nodbeh prayer is about that, and sound of crying, crying, in that prayer. Then, by the way, the interrogators are beating someone up or are passing by, the sound of the screams of those who are being lashed; by the way, these are all at the same time and not at all separate from each other. One truly goes insane. Meaning, if you are in this atmosphere for one hour, you say how can this be. The person loses his balance

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[20] Sadegh Ahangaran, a singer of religious songs and an elegist, became well known for his emotionally charged lyrics during the Iran-Iraq war. His songs excited many and encouraged them to self-sacrifice for the glory of Islam.

entirely. This is all in one hand; on the other hand, every moment the interrogator passes by you, he kicks your feet, which are already bleeding, blood gashes out; then, they come and beat you up: 'Why have you dirtied up the place?'... then, you're standing here, all of a sudden you see some girl is being interrogated next door; she gave in. Gave in meaning she is telling, one realizes that, she's saying that guy's address is this, the other one's is that.... One understands: Then, I'm going to become like this tomorrow. You look and see, a little bit from under the blindfold, you see her feet are bandaged up to her knees, meaning they have put a lot of pressure on her, now, after so long, she has given in.

Fear induction. In this method, techniques were used to arouse fear of death such as in near choking experiences. The participants reported that interrogators routinely used the practice of forcing dirty rags into the mouths of the prisoners while lashing them. They also reported that in many cases, despite tying up the prisoners' hands and feet to the four corners of the torture beds, one or more interrogators would sit on top of the victims to keep their bodies from jumping up in an involuntary response to the impact of the strokes. Moneereh gave a vivid portrayal of such experience, during which she had come face-to-face with death:

> ... They take one arm from above and bring it to the back, and bring your other hand from below to your back. Your fingertips may reach each other with force, but this is not enough; they push until your wrists touch each other behind you, but this doesn't happen naturally; they push, and when they reach each other, then they put the handcuff on...; the body feels an extraordinary pain, a pain that paralyses everything... I was sitting like this for a few hours, in this position. It was a pain that my entire body's water, I was drenched in sweat; I was extremely thirsty... My mouth was extremely dry and I needed water badly... then, in the same position, they took me, laid me down and started to lash me on the feet...and sat on my back, on the hands that were cuffed like that. Any little stroke on those hands could exacerbate the pain; meaning, send it to all the muscles, and at times they would hit my arms with a little stroke of the lash or another thing...Then, they threw a blanket over me and forced a cloth inside my mouth and covered me... although there was a rag in my mouth and a blanket over my head, someone had sat on me and had covered my mouth with his hand to keep me from screaming... and then, beside all the pain, I felt for a moment that I was dying; I mean I felt death from suffocation because as hard as I would try to release my face, with every stroke you would try to free the face to breath,

but there was nothing, and I felt suffocation for a moment, seriously, and fainted....

Keeping Sane in the Midst of Insanity

This category was constructed from a collection of themes, which spoke to the ways participants kept themselves on their feet and held on to hope during their imprisonment. These themes referred to both individual and collective strategies within the prison as well as to the support provided by families and other members in the community. The themes that comprised this category are as follow: Individual and collective coping strategies in prison, family, a source of hope, and role of community support in overcoming adversity.

Individual and Collective Coping Strategies in Prison

This subcategory depicted the strategies, individual and communal, used by the prisoners in order to keep their balance and to survive in the face of extreme cruelty and violence. Singing, humor, and purposeful and goal-oriented activities were the common themes the participants named as having helped them survive their ordeal during imprisonment.

Purposeful and goal-oriented activities. In the atmosphere of the prison, where the prisoners were prohibited from engaging in any thought provoking and strengthening activities, they resorted to every bit of movement in order to remain balanced. Effat, for example, talked about various purposeful activities, which were helpful to her and other prisoners during the years she had to serve prison time. She stated:

> ... During the prison years... one of the things that was full of life was when I would exercise, the yard, outside time. There were very few times in all the seven years, but when they would open the doors... it was as if I would grow wings, I would fly... they've opened the cage door and I'm flying. Then, I would start running, exercising, and in the sun... beside that, we had classes with each other; different classes, English, literature, French, I don't know, Turkish, novels. For example, three people who had read one novel would write down whatever part we could remember and then would tell it to the others... then we had theatre for ourselves. A series of such relations was in reality keeping us on our feet.

Other participants also described the activities Effat spoke of as widespread practices among the prisoners in order to remain balanced and focused. These types of activities were a tradition among Iranian political prisoners and were common practiced during the Shah's era. These were later transferred to the new generation of prisoners by the older ones, many of whom were imprisoned by the Islamic Republic. During the period from 1980 to 1984, however, the prisoners were prohibited from engaging in any types of purposeful activities, whether individually or communally. What Effat referred to in the above passage, depicted her experience during the relatively less restricted period of 1984 through 1986.

Humor. Resilience studies all find that humor is very valuable in coping with harsh conditions (Walsh, 1998, p. 66). This strategy, which was an automatic response to the stressful circumstances, was one of the ways through which the activists could separate themselves from the torment and keep their humanity. Mojdeh presented many examples of uses of humor, which helped her and the other prisoners cope with the horrifying circumstances inside the prison. One the instances she talked about is as follows:

> When they were taking us to the basement, the guard, Mojtaba, who was notorious for whipping individuals uncontrollably and so forth, he was telling us:

'you're going to a place where instead of food, there'll be whipping in the morning, whipping at noon, whipping for supper. Then, one of the girls next to me, no one was making a sound, it was an atmosphere of fright and horror and so forth, suddenly, one of the girls who was sitting next to me and had gastric problems and had to always eat everything boiled, when he said whipping in the morning, whipping at noon, whipping at supper, she said 'tell him to boil mine.' Then, hearing this in the midst of such horror and fright breaks everything. And this was a natural reaction... I wasn't aware that a big part of it was a natural defense response, which we were showing unconsciously then... after each assault, when we would come a little bit out of the shock, we would then just begin to talk about the scenes that were humorous and laugh about them... our hobby was to talk about these comic moments, which would occur during each round of torture or humiliation... we were trying to keep this going under any circumstance; meaning, it was impossible without it. I mean it could have not been possible for a person to tolerate if this part was to be eliminated.

Singing. Singing, this creative energy also was said to have been helpful to the prisoners during hard times. The following is an example through which Bijan explained about the power of singing as a way to remain in touch with reality and to keep one's mental stability:

> I was in the Revolutionary Court's solitary confinement for six months. Then, I would always sing in that cell... every night I would start singing at about seven or eight o'clock... and later on I found out how much this had been valuable to the rest of the individuals who were in the other solitary cells; meaning, they were waiting for this every night... Not only then but also later on, singing was something that would give us all a sense of calmness because there was a lot of time to be spent, and they wouldn't give us any opportunities, especially in solitary confinement.

Effat also talked about the power of singing as a way of coping for the individual, but also a strategy that had healing effects for others:

> They took us from that cell to the fourth floor; to the worst cell they could possibly take us. Cement cells, high walls, the windows out of which you couldn't see the sky... I don't forget that day. Everyone was crying because it was truly horrifying, the destruction, the walls, the cement. I was cleaning until eleven o'clock at night, from for example two-three in the afternoon. Many were crying out loud. Then, I started singing. It's a feeling that when I see there is a hard situation, defensive posture is automatically strong in me; meaning for me to start doing something else. With this non-voice, I started singing for them. I sang and

sang and sang until they calmed down. In reality, the crying was bothering myself...

The individual coping strategies of singing and humor were examples of coping strategies in responses to adverse situations. These strategies, which acted as a shield against the pervasive torment, also illustrated the resistance of the individuals. The above quotes further indicated that whether unwittingly or purposely, individuals braced other prisoners through singing and use of humor. These individual coping methods, therefore, also functioned as protective devices, which had a great impact on the emotional state of other prisoners.

Collective Trauma and Diffusion of Fear

This subcategory emerged as the participants verbalized the power of shared trauma, and as they explained how individuals felt less fear about the outcome of their torment when they found themselves to be among many others experiencing the same horrifying situation. In speaking about collective trauma, themes of need for connectedness, and optimism: staying hopeful and reinstalling hope in others became prominent. We will first read how Moneereh talked about this shared experience, and then, we will look at the two prominent themes. Moneereh stated:

> ...I remember fewer events in which I stood out as an individual during those days because I belonged to the huge masses that were like a sea in all those month in 1979, the days of the revolution. I belonged to that masses that was on the streets making decision about Iran's destiny... and we knew that we were facing death at any given moment... but because I belonged to that flood of people, this fear of death would lose its individual connotation. Meaning, when you are a part of a group, at any moment that group is in danger; you share your fear with them. That fear becomes less important. I wouldn't think of death even though its possibility was present...

In the above passage, Moneereh referred to a "collective identity" (Martin-Baro, 1996, p. 188) formed in order to end the unjust conditions in the country. This collective identity was formed, despite the ideological differences among the masses, and due to their shared interest in removing the Shah from power. Moneereh also suggested that the threat of death to the individual, a threat, which could have damaging and traumatic consequences, became neutralized, as one was a part of a group tackling the sociopolitical problems. These allusions suggest that not every event, in which individuals are faced with death or threat of fatality, has traumatizing consequences; furthermore, not every individual facing such conditions is traumatized. When struggling against oppressive systems, solidarity could be considered the external resource the individuals rely on in reaching their common goals. This "solidarity of a group provides the strongest protection against terror and despair..." (Herman, 1997, p. 215).

Need for connectedness. This theme conveyed the power of collective living, where the aim of the captor was to breakdown all of the captive's defenses, take away his humanity, and transform him or her into his ideal creation. Under such circumstances, the participants declared, the group provided a source of strength and a fountain of hope. As the participants spoke about their prison experiences, they explained that breakdown could more easily happen if the individual was isolated and had no contact with others. Walsh (1998) stated investment in affiliation and collaboration increase our likelihood of overcoming calamities, furthering asserting that relationships are strengthened when a crisis is viewed as a shared challenge to be tackled together (p. 52). The connectedness among the prisoners therefore provided a cushioning effect through which they were able

to more solidly stand in their struggle for holding on to their convictions, and also in their fight to keep their emotional balance and sanity. This was how Moneereh spoke about this issue:

> ... The group was a point of reliance for the individual; meaning, in being with the group, you would feel that you're not alone; especially when we were in cellblocks that held all the resistant prisoners, this feeling was stronger. I would feel that there are others who have the similar circumstances, and this would lessen the fear and the worry. Meaning you think there is another person who thinks like you... and the group approves of you; meaning what the warden tries to break in you full heartedly, meaning breaking your sense of self-esteem, the approval of the group prevents that from happening; it gives you strength, gives you self-esteem... it in deed becomes an antidote for the regime, the warden... that's why I keep thinking that if I had to live in solitary confinement for the nine years, I believe I would have definitely become insane... I was in solitary for six straight months... I experienced that the person loses her balance and talks to herself... one becomes confused about what's real and what's fantasy and so forth. Meaning, this collective living was a source of strength for us.

This need for connectedness became aggrandizement in the summer of 1988, as the massacre of political prisoners was staged. Amir's brief words to this effect testified to this need for connectedness:

> ... at that moment we needed to be together. I don't know what it was about psychologically. Whatever they wanted to do to us, do it to all of us because this separation would make us crazy that what was going to happen later, where we where going to go; an extraordinary anxiety would come over us.

Optimism: Staying hopeful and reinstalling hope in others. This theme described how the courage of each individual encouraged and gave hope to others in prison. The participants talked about this, time after time, both in terms of a dynamic transfer of strength, and also in terms of its adverse effect when one broken prisoner, especially those in the leadership, could spread hopelessness and discourage some of the others. Mina talked about this experience:

Table 6

Other Types of Torture as Reported by the Participants

Psychological Torture	Deprivation of basic psychological comfort: visitation; access to sanitary facilities - Prolonged solitary confinement - Ideological classes – Ideological discussions – Loud broadcast of prayers, cries, and confessions - Force to pray – Use of Prisoners against each other: insane, repentant – Forced to witness the torture of others – Deprived from one's identity: called by room number – Keeping whereabouts of the prisoner from family – Forced to write confessions about self and others – Constant relocation – Blindfold: Used at all times except when with other prisoners - Constant change in regulations - Prohibition of all purposeful activities Humiliation - Intimidation - Prohibition of visitation - Deprivation of face to face visitation/contact with family.
Physical Torture	Lashing of the feet – Lashing of the entire body – Attacks by a mob while blindfolded.
Passive Imposition of Pain	Suspension – Standing: Making prisoners stand on one leg for days; withholding medical treatment.
Fear Induction	Causing near choking experience by pushing cloth in the mouth and covering the nostrils while lashing.

Joint Physical and Psychological Torture	Use of solitary solitary cells for up to 5 prisoners – Sleep deprivation; Bright light- Forced by lashing to accept sexual relations with comrades - Putting insane prisoners in solitary cells with the resistant prisoners.
	Graves: Making prisoners sit in one position all day while wearing a chador and blindfolded. Wooden army beds separated the prisoners from each other. No talking was allowed; the only sound breaking the silence of the room was the broadcast of cries and the hysterical confessions of those who had not been able to endure the torture and had "repented." Prisoners were beat up if they moved an inch. At times, guards walking by quietly would suddenly kick them. This torture was used on more than 100 women prisoners and continued for 9 months.

... the period of interrogation was horrifying. For example, they would beat someone, beat her, beat her, beat her; then she would say: 'I'm sorry; I'll tell, I'll tell, I'll tell.' Then, they would beat someone else; beat him, beat him, beat him; it was an essentially terrible atmosphere, full of fright; it would create fear in you,and then it would be your turn...then, they brought me into a room. I saw, oh, it's not just me. I could see the other ones; I pushed up my blindfold a little bit. Then, a girl was sitting there... she was executed later; I respect her a lot because of the spirit she had. She would not only keep her spirit high, but she would transfer it to the others, and ... in the moments when you're frightened, you can benefit from that kind of courage a lot ... The solidarity among the group was really interesting for me to see. The help they would give each other, the friendships they would create with each other, then, if there was any opportunities there... for example, there were four books, they would share; the most important thing was that no one had panicked; this was very important, very important; ... there is a time when the person may experience fear, experience fear, but come and see, no, there are still people who are standing; they live on. And this solidarity for me, for example, I remember Shohreh... she was one of Rahe-Kargar members; ... her brother was one the central committee members of Minority, who had been killed in a struggle, when she was going to be executed, as if she was for example going to the clinic, she was in such high spirits; kissed everyone; then everybody sang an anthem for her... let me tell you about Daryani, when she was leaving, the Pasdars were essentially losing it; she kissed everyone: 'goodbye guys, hold on to your beliefs; I'm also happy about the path I have chosen,' and in such high spirits...

What Mina referred to here was what Walsh (1998) called "courage and encouragement" (p. 61) when referring to the key beliefs in family resilience (p. 50). Walsh posited that the remarkable courage of people could have a profound meaning for others, encouraging and motivating them to be brave. In the above passage, Mina stated that show of courage by other prisoners lessened her fear and hopelessness. The theme of family, a source of hope, which is presented below will illustrate how families provided hope and support for the activists.

Family, a Source of Hope

This subcategory was the representation of the power and the importance of family support during imprisonment. The participants talked about this source of support in terms of three different factors: Visitation, economic resources, and solidarity.

Visitation. This theme described one the most important sources of hope and strength for the prisoners. Visitation allowed the participants to make connection with and be reminded of the world outside of prison, obtain news, and get in touch with their loved ones. In regards to the power of visitations, Effat stated:

> Visitation was one of the other things in prison that was essentially life... if you were a psychologist, you could see the emotions and the reactions there... for example, some weren't able to sleep for hours after the visitations because it was too much stimulation for them, and some would go to sleep, right after, for five or six hours... every one was either happy, or was sad about something... everyone would try to clean themselves up because they were going to visit the mother... some were sad because they were from other provinces and no one could come to visit them... Then, when we would come back from visitation, we would sit down and tell each other everything about the visitation... that was the family visitation that would be repeated every two weeks if we weren't being punished, if we weren't in solitary... One of the worst things about solitary confinement was that you didn't have visitation either.

Economic resources. Many of the families of the prisoners suffered economic hardship, and conditions of war and inflation made life more difficult for them; nevertheless, many of the activists received economic support from their families while in prison. In addition, for many of the participants, their families had to give the authorities the deed of their house at the time of release of their loved ones. This is how Mehdi described the support he received from his mother during his imprisonment:

> ... I've talked and written about this elsewhere that if they were to let my mother loose, leave her in the 24th of Esfand Sqaure... she would get lost; she wouldn't

be able to find her way home, but throughout the five years I had visitation every other week… she had gone to every prison that held prisoners, every two weeks, what problems my mother hadn't endured… she never abandoned this habit of visiting me every two weeks. Despite all the problems and the hardship, she was always among the first visitors to come. There was a time they used to allow each prisoner to receive 500 Toman each visitation. Well, no matter what, she would bring this 1000 Toman a month for me, from my father's pension, which was barely 4000 – 5000 Toman a month; she told me later on that she used to put this money aside at the beginning of each month; meaning, this had become a part of her life's expenses.

Solidarity. The participants talked about the influence of family support in the form of solidarity and encouragement. Mitra talked about how her family had essentially showed solidarity with her and the other prisoners:

> … For example, my father who for instance would come there, the interrogators would sometimes curse: 'this so and so daughter of yours;' then, my father would come and somehow would tell me I'm proud of you… not exactly in these words; for example, he would say 'they're funny, this Mr. Mohammad said that daughter of yours.' Then, he would somehow smile at me; he wouldn't tell me good going, but he would say see what they're talking about and then would laugh at it… Then, they were constantly going to the Public Prosecutor's Office and its various branches to protest, or in front of the UN building and so forth. Then, a few times, see, my mother was a, both of my parents were the very quiet type; see, for example, have you seen some times when neighbors fight, pots and pans go up in the air… we didn't have any quarrel with any of them in the neighborhood, but imagine two people were arguing on the block, my mother's body would start to shiver; she couldn't tolerate it at all. We would tell her, why are you frightened? It's happening on the street. Then, this person, whom I said was frightened by that commotion, I say her children were the motivation, see, she had become the forefront for the mothers, for instance, anywhere there was a demonstration. Then, she would come and talk about it proudly. She wouldn't tell me on the speaker in the visitation room, she would show with her hands, gesturing: 'Mitra, they put those things on us, blindfolds.' It was very exciting for her. Then, as I said, the person who was afraid of the neighbors turned into one who would sleep…, for example, they had held them over night to intimidate them in order not to go to different places, to the Prosecutor's Office for example … their support was that they never told me to denounce… just write something in order to be released… they were very patient; came every time… well, I think this is the biggest help.

In the above passages the participants made several references to the support families provided for them, and emphasized the importance of such support and show of solidarity. The next theme will illustrate the role of community support and its effect on the participants.

Role of Community Support Before Imprisonment and After Release From Prison

This subcategory addressed the healing power of community support in the midst as well as the aftermath of trauma. In explaining this subject, the participants talked about a country divided at the time of their arrests in the early 1980s. Whether mesmerized by the religious government, paralyzed by fear, or concerned about the war, the people not only did not object to the arrests and the killings, but they also, in many instances, ostracized the families of the political prisoners. Hence, the participants described an absence of support by the public before they went into prison and while they remained incarcerated. The participants, however, also talked about how the public's view had changed at the time of their release, and how the community's welcoming reaction influenced the way they felt about themselves.

The atmosphere inside the country was different when the last groups of the prisoners were released in 1988 and 1990. The Iran-Iraq war had ended and the government did not have any excuses left for justifying the poverty, unemployment, and the inflation that were raging inside the country. In regards to the support she received after her release in 1990, Mina stated:

> ... in prison, they had tried to say hat you are a parasite, a freeloader. Not only you aren't useful, but you are also harmful, you have harmed the society. When I came out, I was very scared; I thought all the people would think badly of me; everyone would reject me. This in my view is a very deep issue; meaning I lived

in fear for years feeling that they wouldn't accept me... When I came out, in our neighborhood, where they knew for years that I was in prison, they welcomed me with respect. We became friends; would talk to each other and make relationships. A lot of people came to see me.

Mina's account is an example of the emotional support and welcome the participants received from the community after their release from prison. This show of support for the released prisoners, was an indication that the regime had ran out of esteem and was no longer able to sustain the minds of the masses. Fear, years of repression, and suffering from the effects of war, however, kept many of the communities silenced and some groups still remained fearful of having any connections with the former prisoners. During this time, the families and friends, especially those made during imprisonment, continued to be the main sources of assistance and backing for the participants.

Post-Release Trauma and Stress

Iran

Trauma did not end once the torture was ceased and the prisoners were released. All the participants reported some level of stress after their release from prison. While still in Iran, there were a number of stressors, which affected the participants in major ways. Table 7 illustrates a number of reported stressors both inside Iran and in exile. In Iran, the released prisoners had to check-in with the authorities once a week, during which time they felt there were no guarantees that they would not be put back in jail.

Every visit had with it the fear of being arrested again. The authorities would engage the released prisoners in ideological discussions or ask their opinions about the

current issues. Hormoz, for example, described his circumstances inside Iran, after his release from prison:

> I came out at that time, thinking that I was being imprisoned again; I mean the issue of loneliness in society. In there you were living with the hope of the outside; you come out and see that life was in there not out here because of loneliness, unemployment, there're no jobs, everyone escapes from you, everybody's afraid... oh, I didn't tell you this, my wife lost her baby when she was arrested... Then, in 1989, the children were born... but I was feeling extremely lonely. Nothing would satisfy me, not money, not work, not life. I was feeling depressed about having lost my friends, feeling that I was alone in society and I couldn't do anything. There were no organizational connections anymore... they wouldn't hire me. Every week we had to go and report where we were living, who are we, what are we, did we go to a wedding, didn't we; did we go to funerals and so forth... after a while we said we aren't coming any more; gradually the leftists especially, myself, I didn't go anymore. They called and said why aren't you coming; we said we aren't coming; we're busy. After a while I went into construction work... but these wouldn't give any results because I was feeling that they could come after me at any time. Every ring would worry me; I would get anxious... dying wasn't the problem; it was that, for example, the phone would ring, I hated their voices; I hated their behaviors. I hated that I had to see them on the street... the town was small; the fact that I couldn't visit anyone for the fear of being followed... I was living, but I wasn't satisfied. I would say I had to do more important things. I suggested to my wife about going overseas a few times... The first time I tried to leave, I was arrested at the airport, I mean in the house; I had my suitcase in my hand. I was tied up for two months... 'Why did you want to leave? Where were you going?' ... After three months, I chose another way, and this time I was able to succeed...

Hormoz's reference to the anxiety and the hatred he felt "every time the phone rang" spoke of the pervasive nature of political trauma brought about by an oppressive system. It further illustrated that life in the Islamic Republic's prisons, where unpredictability and the uncontrollability were experienced every second, was a mirror image of life in society. Not knowing when the regime would strike again was an arduous experience. The option to leave the country, therefore, was reference to a survival strategy, as remaining in the country had grave consequences.

Exile and Post-Migration Trauma

The exile experience was presented in terms of two dimensions of positive and negative experiences. The positive aspects of life in exile were seen in the safety and the opportunities the host country provided. Mitra talked about the advantages she had found in exile:

> Besides the educational aspects and use of media, meaning it's the world of opportunities, you only listen to the radio, television, and the discussions... meaning, from this point it's been extremely positive for me; meaning, getting to know another world, a more extensive world...

The negative aspects of living in exile were explained in terms of post-migration stressors, which were mentioned by all participants although the intensity and type of distress varied. Baker (1992) suggested, "the most significant emotional effect of being forcibly uprooted is the intense feeling of loss that is experienced" (p. 87). The participants spoke about ways by which post-migration experience involved loss of or limitation in social support systems, loss of status, identity of the individual, and other important socio-cultural facets of life that one may enjoy in his or her country of origin. Asylum seeking was also referred to as a scrutinizing and harsh experience. Table 7 provides a list of such aspects as reported by the participants. Bijan's example is used here to demonstrate how an exiled individual may feel restricted in the host country:

> An individual in exile is like someone who has been born again. Meaning, all the life one has behind him, the past he has behind him doesn't count here anymore. Life has to be started from the beginning here. I entered exile just like an individual who enters the workforce right from school... I didn't know the language, I didn't know any work that could be useful here, and I didn't have any living environment on which I could depend or trust. I had to learn the language... then try to be accepted because I would go through training programs with individuals who had been born and who had lived here... But for me who was used to being successful in my education in Iran, had gone to university, then ... I had been employed for fifteen years in directorship positions, but here I had to start from zero and had to adjust myself to a situation, which wasn't to my

liking in many aspects, but I had no choice and I had to live here. Therefore, the person becomes somewhat alienated from self in such circumstances; meaning, every time I want to go back to myself, to my past, I see I have no place for it here; meaning, here, I have to look at everything with the perspective of here...This society completely looks at me as a second-class person, who has come here to work. They don't know anything about my circumstances in the past. ... The society here generally looks at me as an individual who has been unsuccessful or has minimal success, and I don't have the energy that I used to have to leave my socioeconomic circle. Individuals are within fixed circles here; meaning, here, the person can't go beyond his sphere even with a lot of success... the person's boundaries are specified here. This definitely puts pressure on me because I'm used to being another way... essentially, I was raised to, for example, be an educated person, be a known person, for instance, but it's not like this here... when I would say something wrong, would talk wrong, they would look at me as an idiot, a person who can't even talk while that same person might have much less information about many things than I do, but he would definitely allow himself to see me as beneath him... meaning the issue of language is an essential issue in society, and this situation happens to us here now.

Consequences of Political Persecution, Imprisonment and Torture

This category included the themes depicting the destructive effects of experiences of torture and imprisonment. It illustrated not only the lingering quality of such consequences, but it also explained the pervasive nature of these traumatic experiences, which effected individuals, families, and communities as a whole. Effects on the families, physical consequences, psychological consequences, and psychosocial consequences were the subcategories, which facilitated the construction of this category.

Effects on the Families

This was a subcategory that emerged as the participants explained how not only their individual lives were disrupted by their arrests and imprisonment, but also how their arrests implicated the lives of their families. Additionally, this subcategory encompassed

Table 7

Post-release Stressors as Identified by the Participants

Iran	*Exile*
Weekly check-ins with authorities	Language
Fear of Arrest	Restarting life
Forced Ideological discussions	Unemployment
Lack of financial support	Inability to fit in
Lack of social support	Identity issues
Unemployment	Discrimination

the effects of socio-political and cultural values that influenced the way in which

communities reacted toward the prisoners and their families. Amir sated:

> The devastation caused by imprisonment did not really involve the prisoners; meaning, a great part of it was related to the families; then, it would constantly come back. Meaning, the upshot of those family troubles, which had resulted from the imprisonment of, for instance, the child or the husband or the daughter, mother, ... when this daughter, mother, brother, male or female would become imprisoned, ... whatever effects it would have on him or her, it would be doubled, so to speak.

Mehdi gave an example of how the arrest of his niece, a young member of the

Mojahedin, had a bearing on his family:

> In 1981, I had a niece... she was 15-16 years old, a very studious girl...she was my oldest brother's second daughter... she was arrested for distributing leaflets and, for instance, being a part of the Mojahedin's student body. Her arrest was the beginning of the break down of our family unit... when she was arrested, well, with the neighborhood relations, which existed in the South of the City, my sister-in-law ... had a heart attack... my brother, who lives to this day, you know at that time there were a lot of conflicting news about the executions of Mojahedin,

which were being executed in groups; especially, in relation to the girls, it was such that, for example, ... for example for this much gold or silver, such a girl was married to a Pasdar, so that she wouldn't die a virgin.[21] Well, this in our family, with its traditional structure, in the South of Tehran, among the family relations, acquaintances, neighborhood... its pressure I can say was from many angles. A part of it was on the family, on my mother... then, on my sister-in-law, and especially on my brother. Meaning, it was easier for him if they would kill her daughter those first nights than for this story to keep on going, hearing these news. Meaning, we were waiting that at any moment they would bring a bag to the door and say here it's your daughter's stuff and this is her mehrieh.[22] Anyway, they give this girl an execution sentence...then it was changed into life in prison. Well, during this period, my brother somehow became paralyzed. Meaning those relationships in the neighborhood, those patriarchal relationships, he lost his credibility and reputation in the neighborhood; this was very hard. For example, he started smoking cigarettes at that age... then he became an opium addict...to forget themselves somehow; and it wasn't a small thing, the relationships I'm talking about...it wasn't only in relation to our family that this happened. There were a lot of parallel families... a lot of mothers who couldn't stand tall again, they didn't get up, in the midst of these news.

The political crackdown on the opposition had grave social and familial implications. The Islamic Republic not only imprisoned, tortured, and executed individual activists, but it also began "psychological warfare, as a part of a sociopolitical war," in society (Martin- Baro, 1996, p. 138). Many families were economically effected, many children became orphans, and many parents lost their health and livelihood as a result of imprisonment of their beloved children.

According to Martin-Baro (1996), psychological warfare entails "propaganda campaigns, the open or clandestine transmission of news, rumors, and interpretive schemata. These strategies are accompanied by threats and systematic acts of harassment

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[21] The Islamic Republic believed that virgin Muslim girls would automatically go to heaven despite other wrongdoing. In order to prevent the young female members of Mojahedin from "going to heaven," the government began to force arbitrary marriages to Pasdars on these individuals while in prison, in order to "prevent" the Mojahedin to go to heaven after execution. Therefore, under this religious façade, many young female Mojaheds were raped before being executed. Some who escaped execution have since come forth to tell their stories.

and torture that demonstrate the futility and dangerousness of supporting the resistance" (p. 139). One example of the Islamic Republic's use of psychological warfare in the communities in Iran was its spread of rumors about the fate of female Mojahedin, which effected the families within a society which upheld ideas of chastity and honor, and for which any talk of sex was taboo.

To reiterate, the experience of trauma as depicted in the above narratives suggested that the traumatic experiences of the individual prisoners were not only individual but also familial and communal. These experiences took place in the context of Iranian society and effected the whole population.

Physical Consequences

This type of consequence was explained in terms of both instantaneous and long-term effects on the body. The immediate consequences such as pain, fainting, swelling of the feet, and broken bones were talked about as the most frequent results of the physical torture. Table 8 demonstrates various physical consequences of torture. In the following passage, Mojdeh explained the physical consequences she experienced immediately following being tortured:

> ... I tried to place my feet in a certain way so that the whipping strokes would hit my heel more... they also knew that the heel would feel less pain; he kept telling me: 'straighten you feet' ... when I was straightening my feet, he went with force, the guy who I'd said was like a giant, he went with force with his army boots on my back, and stood over my ribs and forced them down, so that my back would become straight, my feet would become straight... then, I saw I couldn't breath at all there. I kept thinking it was my heart. The next day, when he called me for interrogation, I couldn't walk; I couldn't lift up my arm ... anyway I had this pain all the time, until I realized my rib had broken; the scars from it healing incorrectly are still there... my ribcage had broken under his kick... I was always

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[22] Mehrieh is a marriage portion payable to the wife, by the husband, at the time of divorce or separation; Dowry.

in pain in prison, and still now, when it gets cold or when I pick up something heavy, I feel pain.

Mina described the long-term effects of tortures on her body:

> I had an operation on my legs two years ago. All of its veins had popped out... then when I was twenty-one, in the Evin prison, the doctor said 'you've gotten arthritis;' ... at age twenty-one, I had gotten arthritis because of how he had beat me with the handle of the rifle; I have pain. For years in prison, I would get sick for two or three days every month. Meaning I had to constantly take painkillers. It has a terrible pain... when I'm not careful, all my veins would become contracted, comes to my head, then it automatically activates the gastric illness I had, when I got that blood infection and I wasn't able to eat anything anymore in the solitary confinement in Gohardasht, it gets to the point that from my back, pressure gets put on my stomach, then I throw up. I throw up, throw up, and throw up. Then, I become better... but it's a very black and bad period. I can say it's somehow like one dying and becoming alive again; it feels like that.

Psychological Consequences

Despite reporting long-term physical consequences of torture, the participants stated that the psychological consequences had been the most persistent and difficult consequences of torture and imprisonment to deal with. These consequences were numerous, and the following were some of the consequences that were reported: Having difficulty relating to the outside world, feeling that the general population did not understand and could not relate to them, even those who shared a similar background of political activism but were able to escape imprisonment and torture, lowered self-esteem, difficulty, and in some cases, inability to initiate new tasks, and loss of courage. While three of the participants reported an increased intolerance for larger groups, all of them reported a willingness to bypass casual encounters and instead a desire to associate with those who share commonalities with them. Extreme emotional need as well as hypersensitivity, and hyper-vigilance was also reported.

Other short-term psychological consequences of torture, as reported by the participants, included insanity although the participants reported of individuals who have not been able to gain their emotional stability and become functional to this day. Withdrawal, depression, feeling psychologically drained in response to the cycle of hope and fear in anticipation of torture, and fear were some of the other reported long- and short-term effects of torture. In the following passage, Bijan described some of the short-term consequences of isolation in solitary confinement:

> ... the person would essentially become melancholic after being alone for a while. Meaning, he will talk to himself constantly without realizing; I found out about this later. I didn't know I was talking to myself, but one time when I was still in solitary confinement in prison and there were others in the other solitary cells, they would let us go out in the yard for half an hour each day; then, we would walk in the yard; I saw they are all talking to themselves out loud: 'bela, bela, bela, bela'... loudly. I said to myself, why are they doing this? Then, I realized my own lips were moving too, and I hadn't been aware...

Effat talked about the long-term psychological effect of torture, which she experienced during the massacre of 1988, as she was lashed for days, each time proceeding the sound of Azon. She explained how traumatic memories were triggered and trauma was relived with more than ten years after the actual torment took place:

> When it's time for Azon, I go through that same feeling because it has become conditioned for me. The feeling that I essentially shrink, the contraction, for I now have to go on the table, the lash must come on me; meaning I go into an atmosphere that I don't like; an atmosphere that's painful...

Psychosocial Consequences

These consequences referred to the functioning of the individual within the systems of family, work, school, and in general, the larger society. Changes in relationship with spouses, difficulty in expressing emotions when necessary, unrealistic

expectation within interpersonal relationships, impairment in personal life, and fear of rejection vs. need for connectedness were some of the psychosocial consequences reported by the participants. This was Bijan's account of how his life was effected by his experiences of imprisonment and torture:

> ... The reality is that I gradually, after my release, felt a feeling of withdrawal and feeling of vague depression; meaning a depression that doesn't seemingly show itself as depression directly, but it completely influences the person's feelings. Meaning, I feel that day-by-day, my tendency for group interaction has decreased and my life has become more of an individual life. I mean, I can't tolerate a lot of people; meaning in the group, I always try to find an individual so that I could move away from the group... and more and more every day I feel that people don't understand me... I can say that the harms I experienced directly and indirectly in prison played a role in damaging my normal life...

In regard to consequences that influence one's progress in society, Amir stated:

> ... I saw the consequences of it in my normal life later, here overseas. I saw, when I was out there, before my second imprisonment, I was more active and more innovative. My reactions were fast in response to the events, and even at times my planning. My innovation is less. It's important to be innovative. I used to have creativity and planning. Now I see these have weakened... only my reactions are good. Meaning if something would happen, I don't become confused; I can quickly understand... what to do. But, well now nothing's happened, do something yourself; there I don't do anything, just as if you're still in prison. I have to wait for something to happen to me, whether bad or good, for me to do something.

Moneereh also indicated:

> I hear from the former prisoners, who live in Iran, that after all those years in prison and despite the fact that they resisted there and stood strong, but when they live out there, they have less courage than the ordinary people. Although they accepted even death during imprisonment, but in their every day lives, their bravery has lessened. May be that's because for every small step, they have to think of the heaviest punishments; meaning, think that it can be like that; the most severe punishments may be waiting for them..."

In the first section, the themes, categories, and subcategories depicting the pre-arrest conditions including the childhood experiences of the participants were discussed.

The first section further entailed themes, categories, and subcategories about post-arrest experiences, including torture and imprisonment. The main categories discussed were development of resiliency, which depicted the early experiences of the participants influential in the formation of worldview. Next, the pervasive nature of political trauma in Iran illustrated various practices by the oppressive regime aimed at physical and psychological destruction of the activist. Keeping sane in the midst of insanity, explained the coping strategies and internal and external resources utilized by the participants to remain resistant. Post-release stress and trauma was constructed to show the continuity of trauma after release from prison, and consequences of political persecution imprisonment and torture pinpointed specific sequelae of politically based trauma as narrated by the participants. The following section illustrates how the participants made sense of their trauma, how they remained hopeful and strong in the midst of political violence, and how their ideas were transformed as a result of their experiences.

Making Sense of Personal Trauma

Resistance in Prison

All participants in this study were individuals who went through a great deal of hardship in order to hold on to their identity and humanity, both in terms of not taking on the identity of their capturers and in terms of not betraying their comrades by giving the interrogators information about them. The participants, therefore, defined resistance in prison as not giving into the conditions set by the prison authorities. When asked what helped them remain hopeful and resistant, the most common responses included believing

firmly in one's convictions, and fulfilling the expectations of self and others. These themes are presented below.

Appraisal of crisis: Firm belief in one's convictions. This theme described the way participants thought about and evaluated their experiences of political activities, the legitimacy of the ruling authority and its violent acts, and their own beliefs and values. This was a powerful factor through which the participants were able to remain strong, for the most part, despite the atrocities committed against them. Bijan's explanation was a clear-cut representation of this theme:

> Factors that helped me in prison were my belief in science and my disbelief in metaphysics, which really were a part of me, as well as all those convictions that existed in me about opposition to injustice...

The following represents how Mina spoke in this regard:

> The struggle, the struggle I believed in would give me a certain mental strength. I knew the Islamic Republic is refuted and has no legitimacy; it's the representative of executions, representative of torture, and representative of a power that has created hardship for people; has started the war... and it wouldn't be an alternative for me to move toward. That's why I always felt that I was legitimate, my thinking was right, and I had made the right decision for saying no to this time.

In regards to coping with both the immediate and the long-term psychological effects of torture, Basoglu and Mineka (1992) emphasized the important role of cognitive styles and attributional processes, suggesting "individuals, who have greater awareness of the socio-political context of torture and its objectives, seem to be better protected against the traumatic effects of torture" (p. 213). Summerfield (1995) also stated that he saw in his private practice on a regular basis what Bettelheim concluded in 1960 about the

ability of those incarcerated in Auschwitz as communists rather than as Jews to draw on their political ideals to better withstand what was happening to them.

According to Walsh (1998), "belief systems are powerful forces in resilience." She further asserted, "we cope with crisis and adversity by making meaning of our experience: linking it to our social world, to our culture and religious beliefs, to our multigenerational past, and to our hopes and dreams for the future" (p. 45). The above accounts by Bijan and Mina illustrated two main beliefs, which facilitated the positive appraisal of these individuals' adversity. These beliefs were a moral view on what is right, and a belief in justice from a humanistic perspective and rejection of fatalism.

Bijan's disbelief in metaphysics and rejection of fatalism had roots in his childhood, at which time he had come to believe that there was no order in the world and there was no higher power that would prevent bad things from happening. According to Martin-Baro (1994), "fatalism is a way of understanding human existence as a condition in which everyone's fate is already predetermined and everything happens inescapably" (p. 200). Fate did not have any meaning for Bijan. This allowed him to not only take an active stance in his fight against the regime, but it also helped him reject the ideology of the regime, which was based on both fatalism and metaphysics.

Mina's stance on what is right was also rooted in her family and community experiences such as her personal experience of gender inequality within her family. Expanding these ideas, she had arrived at viewing the actions of the regime as illegitimate and wrong. Both of these participants' "transcendent beliefs" (Walsh, 1998, pp. 68-70) provided meaning and purpose beyond self, offering them clarity about their lives and consolation and support in their dealings with their torment.

Expectations, the theme that is presented below, was another emergent theme, which was indicated to have an influence on resistance in prison.

Expectations. This theme represented the participants' expectations of themselves as well as what they perceived others to expect from them. Bijan explained how these self and other expectations help him overcome the ordeal of torture and prison life.

> ... another thing was indeed the expectations of others of me, and I knew this expectation existed. Meaning I knew that outside on the streets there are so many who count on me and... I didn't want them to lose hope. I especially knew that my spouse has this expectation from me and the fact that I didn't want her to become disgraced because of me influenced me a lot. And of course one's experiences and the expectations one generally has of oneself are also very important. Meaning, I was expecting this from myself that if I become defeated here and in this matter, I would never be able to hold my head up in my life. I mean I knew I could never be a normal person and I didn't want to be like that.

Bijan spoke about self-expectation as well as the expectations of other activists', including his wife, who were not arrested and were hopeful that the struggle would continue, of him. To fulfill these expectations in "the age of public recantations" in Iran meant to remain resistant by refusing to give information to the interrogators about others and cause their arrest, refuse to repent and accept the ideology of the regime, or to give interviews denouncing your principles. Mojdeh also talked about this expectation in the following passage:

> ... In 1983, they stormed into our house... they had come to arrest me... I was saying goodbye. My sister hugged me and said: don't talk; and these words of hers were always in my ears...

The above excerpts were examples of the participants' accounts in regard to fulfillment of family and community expectations influencing resistance. Walsh (1998) proposed that families develop collective beliefs about the world and their own place in it based on their position and experiences in the social world over time. She further asserted

that family norms are shaped by these shared beliefs, and are spoken through expected rules governing family life. Other functions served by these shared beliefs, as pointed out by Walsh, are to provide coherence and organize experience to enable family members to make sense of their adversity.

In the 1980s, use of public recantations, during which the repentant denounced their past actions, their organizations, confessed to their sins, and announced their faithfulness to the Islamic Republic was a common practice by the regime. Repenting would create a sense of personal defeat in many. These "victims," having to live with the image of themselves as accomplices of the perpetrators, would be preoccupied with shame, self-loathing, and a sense of failure (Herman, 1997, p. 94). It would also alienate them from the rest of the prisoners, and bring shame to the family, as many considered the repentant to be traitors. Walsh (1998) stated, relationship rules both explicit and implicit provide expectations about roles, actions, and consequences that guide family life. Core beliefs are fundamental to family identity and coping strategies, expressed in such rules as 'we never give up when the going gets rough' (p. 47).

The participants' consideration of the expectation of the families highlighted the notion of resistance as embedded in familial and communal expectations, perhaps indicating that the family and community expectations, in this context, were we do not betray our comrades, we do not bow before the Islamic Republic, and we do not bring shame to our families.

Transformation

Transformation was a subcategory specifically related to changes in the views of the participants after their imprisonment. Hence, while the participants may have gone

through various points of changes their lives, this particular category took into

consideration, specifically, the effects of their prison experience. The following themes

served in the construction of this subcategory: Growth in the face of adversity,

reconsideration of views and approaches to human rights issues, and historical memory.

Personal growth in the face of adversity. This theme elucidated the personal gains

the participants reported to have made from their experiences during their imprisonment.

While the gains were different for each of the participants, the similarity arose in their

ability to interpret their experiences in positive terms. Mitra, for example, talked about a

sense of ability to overcome any hardship after what she had endured in prison. This was

how she talked about this new feeling:

> In regards to life, my general view in the past, right now my slogan in general is
> that nothing's impossible... I'm really grateful to the authorities, who beat me up
> [laughs], I'm joking, but really that was a very good experience; see ... a simple
> example, imagine in this field [law] the person has to constantly write papers;
> some nights, the work that's hard for even the German students themselves, then
> you had just began this study at age 37... well it's hard, you see? That's why
> some nights when you haven't slept in a few nights ... fatigue, then you're
> finishing that work, I keep telling myself, I say: 'Mitra, it's the last nights, it's the
> last days; think as if you're there'... I try to transfer this in regard to different
> issues... marital problems, children... I keep trying to say, it will be all right, one
> hundred percent... I don't say it can be done today; I say the base can be set up,
> but it's possible and nothing is impossible in my view; really it's not.

Mehdi also talked about the gains he made from his experience in prison both in

terms of knowledge and in terms of inspiration and creativity. In telling his story, Mehdi

talked about two specific creative surges resulting from the depth of his trauma in the

days following the massacre of the political prisoners in the summer of 1988. This is how

Mehdi referred to that experience:

The first night they returned the television to our ward... no one was paying any attention to the television. They had hit and executed our friends; there was a feeling of shock, sorrow, and uncertainty... all the guys would cry for no reason; it was really a bad situation. We had become like the people who suddenly lose their homes in a flood. Two things happened that night... one was that they showed Khomeini on TV... one wanted to curse at him ten times... well, this courage was taken away ... I went into the cell; I had broken into tears... I wrote a poem... it was more due to the fact that the people standing below him on [on TV] were saying 'Khomeini you're my soul...' I was thinking he [curses] has killed our friends, now this people are crying for him. It was very hard for me to tolerate that. The poem was the product of that moment... The second thing happened late at night. The TV was showing the picture of a flower; it would end it's programs like that. Then, it broadcasted the sound of a solo sitar... everyone was glued to the TV. This sound really penetrated me so much that it went though my veins. In that moment, that sound was very pleasant for me. I told myself, if we went out of here in one piece, I'll go to see if I can make that sound. I was enchanted by that sound. One of the things, now that I'm out,... I went after that sound; I took classes for a few months... I bought a sitar... Now, incidentally, anywhere there is an anniversary gathering, for example the two years I went to France, while I gave speeches, I also played the sitar for them. Of course, I tell them the whole story. I tell them I don't play professionally, and that you haven't come here to hear me play, but it is about reminisces of a memory.

Mehdi's accounts exemplified this assertion by Walsh (1998) that the imagination can carry individuals beyond their crisis situations, and enable them to envision new possibilities and "make the best of a tragic situation" (p. 73). In addition to becoming inspired to engage in the arts, Mehdi articulated another way in which he learned from his prison experience. In the following passage, he explained the overall first-hand knowledge he had gained as a result of his experiences in prison:

If I want to give a brief summary of my imprisonment, it's like this: It was a very useful period in relation to gaining information, essentially, a general knowledge about sociology; because each [political] group in there was the representative of a faction of our society. From this point of view, I don't think I could have gained this knowledge from any books or by going to school. It was very positive from this point of view.

Walsh (1998) stated "resilience is promoted when hardship, tragedy, failure, or disappointment can also be seen as instructive and can serve as an important impetus for

change and growth" (pp. 75-76). In the above quotes, Mitra and Mehdi made references to the gains they made as a result of their prison experiences despite the hardship they endured. Such allusions brought attention to the concept of "new resources and options emerging in response to the 'limit situation'" (Martin-Baro, 1996, p. 119). It illustrated the possibility of learning from one's adversity and emphasized the potential for using this first-hand knowledge in concurring future challenges, and in helping other individuals and communities cope with their hardship.

Reconsideration of views and approaches to struggle for justice. Two major points evolved when the participants talked about their current views regarding political activism. One was the skepticism about organizational activity and following organizational guidelines, and the other was the development of a sense of personal responsibility in ending political violence. Mehdi stated:

> After my release, ... well, many of the principles that were values for me before turned into anti-values; they had essentially become reversed. A number of meanings had exchanged places, lost their place so to speak, and a number of other things had taken their place... at this moment, I don't have the privilege of being a member of any organizations [laughs]... While I believe that the issues related to revolution and important issues could be solved through group work, I am not a part of any group or movement that is affiliated with organizations.

In the following passage, Mina described how she had altered her thinking in regards to political activity:

> I have closed the door on organizational activity completely for myself since 1982; even when I came here I told them that we were partly sacrificed because of your policies... My motivations haven't changed in relation to Marxism, in relation to the Islamic Republic. I believe in the equal rights for all human beings. I've changed in the sense that I don't perceive the organizations in the way I used to. The organizations have a lot of faults, and until they take a look at themselves, like we did, I mean the structure of the organizations have to change completely...

This theme was consistent with the participant's accounts about the shortcomings of the organizations, which previously was discussed under the sub-category of opposition's lack of sophistication and resources. Most of the participants believed that the organizations had behaved ingenuously in not preparing their members for the struggle they had undertaken. While the participants continued to believe in justice and unceasing struggle for human rights, their stance was more informed. They rethought the notion of self-sacrifice, no longer considering it as a necessary principle in fighting for justice. They also altered their thinking about organizational activities and conformity to the group. This struggle was a personal choice, a more conscious step in the service of upholding the basic rights of human beings, by ending the sociopolitical violence. In this regard, Hormoz further explained:

> Now that I've remained alive and I'm here, I think I have a responsibility to the human beings who're gone... I think I have a responsibility to their cause, not only in political ways, but in terms of the results of those lives, what happened to us and what was our ... they're all in my mind now... and all of my attempt is so that no one would be executed like they were, or no one would be tortured like I was... we have a responsibility to them, and this responsibility in turn becomes a bigger one, which is to the people.

Historical memory. The participants talked about the importance of remembering what has happened in the past and why. This, they explained, was crucial in the attempt to prevent violent history from being repeated. They talked about their activities in terms of fulfilling the responsibility of keeping alive the memories of those who died, for the protection of future generations. Incidentally, participating in this research was referred to as a way to carry out this responsibility. In the following passage, Mehdi talked about the importance of remembering history for prevention of future political violence:

... I think at least two generations, if not saying of the greatest people in our society, of the divergent thinkers, are gone; its most important height is the mass killing in the year 1988. Well, I'm one of the living eyewitnesses of this event. I, with regard to this issue, I thought anywhere my observations could be said, loudly said, openly said, and fully said. You know, because the seal of silence that has been on the lips of the prisoners, it's not more than a few years that they've broken this seal... I believe there are as many testimonies as there are prisoners... this is my testimony ... now after all those years after the big massacre, the two factions in the government haven't said a word about that massacre. They still haven't said why they made that decision at the end of the war... even some of the today's reformists; in the best scenario it could be said that they're changed. I also believe that people change; didn't we change too? But we have to ask them that when they were thinking like that then, why were they thinking like that, and now that they think like this, what guarantees are there that this will not be repeated tomorrow. Not for ourselves, for tomorrow's generation at least; meaning, tomorrow's children wouldn't be victimized like this... because they say our people are forgetful; we forget too fast. I'm responsible, as much as I can, not to let this be forgotten. I still have the last will and testament of many of the guys in my heart... this is not just my responsibility; it's your responsibility too. It's our responsibility to not let this be forgotten... with the repeat of this story and researches like this the historical amnesia of our people would lessen... I think it's becoming like this now, little by little, this new generation that is entering the sociopolitical life of the society is creating this hope about not forgetting, or at least not forgetting too fast about what has happened...

Walsh (1998) stated, "the development of an informed conscience often extends ethical concerns, a commitment to action, and even a life course on behalf of others" (p. 70). This, she called transcendence. Referring to families of homicide victims, Walsh suggested that in grouping together to support other families or prevent similar tragedies, their lives take on a new purpose. Mehdi's accounts as presented in the above passage were his response to my question of "how do you make sense of your survival in the midst of political violence in Iran where so many lives have been lost?"

In answering this question, Mehdi talked about a sense of individual and collective responsibility to keep the memories of the victims alive. He further elaborated and emphasized that it is only through unveiling the truth that the process of

accountability can be facilitated and a sense of justice can be restored. His responsibility, therefore, was to do his part to make sure the truth was told.

Historical memory both individual and shared, to which Mehdi referred, forms the basis of a collective identity, which remembers and safeguards the memory of the victims. This remembrance and preservation allows the recovery of the validity of the victims' struggle for human dignity and justice. Historical memory further facilitates the restoration of the victims' good names and that of their families to reaffirm their dignity and to bring about healing to the communities. Lastly, historical memory holds responsible individuals and systems that violate the human rights and commit crimes against humanity in the service of protecting the future generations.

This section presented the participants' views on resistance, the sense they made of their survival, and what they thought their proactive work for the rights of others meant to them. It illuminated the notion that while the participants endured great torment, they found resources such as relationships with inmates and family members, personal appraisal of their predicaments, and personal and affiliative expectations in order to remain resilient. In the next section, the process of becoming is presented, through the analysis of turning points in the lives of the participants.

On the Process of Becoming: The Turning Points

This section of the results encompasses the analysis of the turning points, which shed light on the course of the development, clarifying what events, people or influences have directly affected or indirectly played a part in the process of change in the narrators' lives. Here, the analysis concentrated on how the participants came to be who they are as an accumulation of past events and choices among possibilities in their lives. Sartre

(1963, as cited in Bloom, 1998) proposed that examining these points make it possible to understand how individuals surpass their conditioning, thereby manifesting "positive praxis" (p. 65). These landmarks were identified through analysis of the language used by the participants as they directly talked about change or as they alluded to its implications. Particular phrases, singular words or indirect references to change were deemed as determinants of turning points. Tables 9 to 9H illustrate the turning points in the life of each of the participants.

The analysis revealed seven common major turning points in the lives of the participants. These included childhood, adolescence, adulthood, revolution of 1979, arrest and imprisonment, massacre of political prisoners in 1988, and post-prison. While these major turning points are common among the participants, there are also salient events specific to each individual story, which have been illustrated in tables 9 through 9H.

<div align="center">Common Turning Points</div>

Childhood

Childhood was described as the first stage of life, during which early turning points effected the participants' lives. Most of the participants referred to this period, which lasted until age 13, as an eventful time, with the exception of Amir and Mitra, who described their childhoods as calm and without significant incidents. Childhood began as a period of familiarity with hardship, specifically due to circumstances outside of the family. This period included turning points through which the participants became aware

of inequality, and in some cases, injustice. The participants commonly stated that they felt loved within the atmospheres of their families. Mojdeh for example stated:

> ... an atmosphere of great kindness; meaning, what I remember from my childhood inside the family is only kindness. But because of the economic status we had, the humiliation one feels in society due to being from a lower class, every child feels, those are always in my mind. I mean I experienced that too, but I only have good memories of being in my family.

Personal experiencing of economic hardship, witnessing the misfortune of others, or awareness of inequalities in society during childhood had an impact on the early development of views regarding justice and equality. This is how Effat talked about her early awareness of inequalities:

> I understood, in my childhood, the difference between rich families and less well off families, I can't say poor, in the kind of flowers they had, and I always was envious of those trees, those who had large flower trees, which our house didn't have...

Mojdeh also talked about awareness of inequalities as well as early influence in her life:

> I grew up in a fairly poor family, not really well off and not very poor... In childhood, I came to know poverty and economic issues that I would see around me, and well, I was also dealing with it myself. There were always political discussions at home, it was the topic of the house because my father would always talk against the Shah's regime, and because one of my sisters was a reporter and the other was a college student, political issues were always discussed. I was 9 years old when for the first time these issues became serious for me. I asked my sister's friend, at that time I would just hear communism, I didn't know at all what it meant, I asked, what does communism mean?

Another example of such early awakening, which influenced the development of a sense of justice in some of the activists, was witnessing and experiencing violence against women. Mehdi, for example, was an eyewitness to the distress of his mother, who, in a patriarchal socio-cultural system, obediently carried the weight of the family on her shoulders without asking much for herself. Here is how Mehdi described his perception of this period:

... If I wanted to portray a quick snapshot of the past, there was always injustice toward my mother in the family. Winters, during childhood, in the southern part of the city[23], breaking the ice on the frozen basin, taking water from it, pouring it into the large washtubs; then, the oil boilers, with which you had to fight for hours to get it to warm up some water, and then washing the clothes of ten – twelve family members. This was my mother's every day job, having to cook at the same time. For example, my father would never say that he was going to bring guests home. He would show up at noon for lunch with four of his friends and lunch had to be ready. This, some how would require the mother's invulnerability... I think this period is more of a nightmare for me...a nightmare that had a lot of bitterness, but had its own sweetness, and this sweetness would mainly become warmer by my mother's presence.

Mina also spoke about her experiences of gender inequality and violence against women inside her family during her childhood:

...a lower middle-class family, which was financially growing at some point in time, but because of the oppression after the coup deta't of 1953, at some point was put under social repression. I myself experienced poverty very vividly. Because my mother and father are both Turks, in terms of the rights of boys and girls, they would give the boys more rights. They've changed a lot now, but it did its damage at that time. They had social and political awareness, but because of their extremely traditional views, until 1979, they always saw the boys as having the top role... I grew up too fast; meaning became familiar with many issues and empathized with pain of others; I can say between ages of eleven to fourteen... on another hand, we would completely witness the violence that my father would show in his relationship with mother. He had a short temper and would get upset easily... my mother was very weak in his relationship with my father; she wasn't able to defend herself... you see what an individual full of contradictions he was; on one hand he could create an atmosphere at home to familiarize you with the October Revolution, familiarize you with Lenin; then, on the other hand, in family relationships, for example my mother wasn't able to defend herself.

In the above passages, the participants talked about influences in their childhood, which built the foundation for the way they came to understand themselves and the world around them later in their lives. They alluded to observation of wrong and right, about inequality within the family and in the larger social, and the influences of family members and intergenerational legacies.

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[23]The South section of the city refers to areas usually housing poor or lower middle class families. Some houses in the south of Tehran were built of tin. People living there were extremely poor and deprived.

Mina and Mehdi made references to the issue of violence against women. Throughout the world, women suffer discrimination and oppression, for no reason other than their gender, and Iranian women have not been exempt from such treatments. The paternalistic perspective, the male-centered culture as well as the socio-economic status of women have long forced them into position of passivity. Women within this society were seen as creatures, who cannot decide for themselves, and whose duty was to serve and satisfy their husbands. "It is only in the realm of motherhood that women 'evolve.'... It is as a mother that a woman is honored" (Seif, 2003, p. 3). It is important to point out that violence against women did not have any place in many Iranian households, especially, those with secular and modern beliefs. Socio-economic status of women, educational advancement of family members, and level of religious beliefs played parts in the degree of credence in women's rights within the family.

While such beliefs and practices existed in Iran for centuries, with the rise of the Islamic Republic, violent treatment of women became legal. Forcing women to observe the Islamic dress code, stoning, rape of political prisoners, depriving women from positions of judiciary judgment and other oppressive practices showed the rampant nature of misogyny in Iran after 1979.

Furth (1980) suggested children as young as 9 think seriously about the nature of society, but they still have little understanding of political issues, indicated Adelson, Green, and O'Neil (1969). Adelson (1972) further asserted, "Children are unable to imagine social reality in the abstract" and only roughly understand concepts such as liberty and rights, which are essential to political thought (p. 109). Adelson and colleagues (1969) suggested that reasoning about politics changes during the course of

adolescence. The next turning point, adolescence, will illuminate this development in reasoning and change in understanding basic concepts about self and society.

Adolescence

Adolescence, ages 13 through 17, was commonly experienced as a turning point. During this period of "search for identity," as declared by Bijan, inspiration by teachers, books, political circles and friends were influential in the growth of the participants. For most of the interviewees, this was a period of ascent toward developing a political awareness. The following are examples of such movement:

> *Effat.* In sixth grade I said I was a Communist. At that point, I had read Maxim Gorky's *Mother*... there isn't anything against God in that book, but it was like now I'm a Communist, and at that point for me this meant that there is no God.

> *Mina.* In junior high, I feel independence and I'm confident that I can do many things because they would let me for example shopping for the house, be in social relations, and this would give me self-confidence... then, I'm thirteen, there is the trial of Golsorkhi[24] on TV and his throwing water on the Shah's picture, which created such turbulence, such commotion inside, I can say it with this emotion, created inside me. This is one of the most beautiful periods in which I feel I can grow and gain knowledge from things that are outside of the closed environment of eat- and- sit and the school.

> *Hormoz.* "I went to high school, and well it's a period during which the person begins to know some other issues... in tenth grade I began political activism."

Keating (1980) suggested five basic characteristics of adolescent thinking: (a) thinking about possibilities, (b) thinking ahead, (c) thinking through hypotheses, (d)

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[24] A leftist poet, who was executed by the Shah's regime. His trial was the first to be broadcasted by the media, shedding light on the treatment of political opposition, and stirring public discourse regarding the regime of Pahlavi.

Table 8

Consequences of Torture

	Short-term	Long-term
Physical	Swelling of the feet- Fainting Broken ribcage- Broken jaw- Varicose Veins Lung failure- Kidney failure- Softness of bones- Blood infection- Drastic weight loss- Deformation- Death	Kidney disease - Lung disease- Deafness - Migraines – Chronic pain – Scars
Psychological	Insanity-Talking to self- Hysterical crying- Delirium- Restlessness- Anxiety Depression- Fear- Feeling worn out- Suicide- Nightmares- Insecurity Cognitive disorganization- Conditioning generalization- Loss of self-esteem- Loss of trust in self and others.	Restlessness- Anxiety- Depression- Learned helplessness- Suicide Nightmares- Feeling worn out -Conditioning/ generalization-Fear- Anticipation of ambush- Constant anticipation/fear of loss- Low self- esteem –Insanity- Flashbacks- Re-experiencing the trauma- difficulty initiating new learning- Decreased courage and daring - Inability to initiate new tasks/experiences- Extreme emotional need.

| Psychosocial | Withdrawal- Self-imposed isolation – | Impairment in personal life- Intolerance for large groups - Loss of social identity- Post-migration trauma- difficulty adjusting to new situations such as a new job. |

thinking about thought, and (e) thinking beyond conventional limits. These characteristics, which distinguish adolescence from middle childhood, indicate a pattern of cognition that considers alternatives not immediately present, engages in developing "second order thinking, developing rules about rule," and uses newly sophisticated cognitive abilities to rethink fundamental issues of social relations, morality, politics, and religion. The participants' engagement with leftist ideas reflected their developmental changes during this period.

Cole and Cole (1989) also stated adolescence is a time in which the way young people think about themselves and the world changes; the relationship to parents is modified, and autonomy, work, and responsibility of caring for others replaces dependence on total parental support (p. 519). Erikson (1968) suggested that the formation of identity becomes crucial during adolescence because this is the time when child's beliefs, abilities, and desires must be reconciled with adult norms. That is, the individual identity and social identity must be made compatible. For this reason, Erikson characterized the central crisis of adolescence as one of "identity versus identity confusion." Identity signifies patterns of beliefs about the self built by adolescents, which reconcile the many ways they are like other people with the ways in which they differ from them (p. 94).

Erikson (1968) further held that identity defined a "sense of personal sameness and historical continuity" (p. 17). Adopting the views stated above, it could be indicated that the concrete thinking about society in childhood and the formative experiences during that period developed into more analytical reasoning about society and politics in adolescence. The need for belonging to and identifying with a group and distinguishing

oneself from others, however, was a more salient task during this period; thus, declaring oneself a communist during this stage was more likely a sign of the need for belonging and identity as opposed to an autonomous and well-informed decision about adhering to a doctrine. Adulthood, the next turning point, was the period in which the participants arrived at clearer convictions.

Adulthood

The period of young adulthood began at age 18. Four major turning points, the Revolution of 1979, arrest and imprisonment, massacre of political prisoners in 1988, and post-prison were located in this period. The exception to this was in the case of Hormoz, who placed his post-prison turning point in his old age.

For Mitra, Bijan, Amir, Effat, and Moneereh, the transition to adulthood was simultaneous with more serious and extensive political activism within the student movement as they entered university. For Mina and Mojdeh, this period corresponded with greater organizational responsibilities and political activism in the post-revolution atmosphere. Mehdi described this period as the "most eventful" period of his life, involving intense political activism and his prison experience.

> *Moneereh.* "University not only makes the role of activism more distinct in my life, but I also enter a period in which I have to think about who I am … now, I have to make a choice myself."

> *Amir.* "… But it began from university. Little by little I realized what we wanted to do and what parts of it I liked. It was here that the concept of socialism was discussed; I followed their books."

> *Mehdi.* "… My wasted youth, which was … the best years of my life, I went to prison; it could be said that the events and incidents, the important events and the happenings that influenced my life were during this period."

Revolution of 1979. All the participants regarded this event as a major turning point in their lives. This event not only changed the individual's life but also had a significant effect on the make up of the society at large. This turning point represented a period of ascent in the stories of the participants. It is during this period of regime change that political activism in Iran enters a new era. Many groups surface into the political life of the country, recruiting individuals, mainly the youth, invigorated by revolutionary passion, as their members. The following illustrates what Mehdi stated in this regard: "The revolution changed the family atmosphere, its make up and its issues." This period of revolution also presented an ascend in Bijan's political life: "After the revolution, I naturally entered the Fadayi Organization and a new phase in political activism began." Moneereh regarded this event as a formative turning point in her life as well. This was some of what she uttered in this regard: "Revolution fits in the period of my adulthood... well for all those my age this has been a very big event, and it's clear that we all took an active part in it."

This turning point presented an ascent in Mina's life as it does in the lives of the other participants. She stated:

> It was a very fruitful, very fruitful period for me. I can say in the four years before my arrest, I feel like I grew much more mature... it's an exceptional, important period in my life, during which I feel I was swallowing all those events and those circumstances with thirst.

Amir, who was freed from Shah's prison with the Revolution stated: "The era of revolution began... during this period, because of my previous imprisonment, my activities became more extensive, and I don't know, are at a higher level."

Arrest and imprisonment. Arrest and imprisonment was another major turning point in the participants' lives. This period, because of its traumatic events and prolonged existence was considered a time with major implications and impacts, both negative and positive. The main thematic interests for this period were trauma, resistance and coping. Mehdi asserted: "The most important chapter of my life could be prison."

> *Mitra.* "... I remember when I was arrested. I was arrested in May of 1983, but well that wasn't a pretty day."

> *Moneereh.* "Another period, I can say, starts with my arrest... I think my arrest becomes the beginning of something new in my life."

Massacre of political prisoners in 1988. For all the participants Massacre of Political Prisoners in 1988 was another major turning point, which was experienced as a period of descent. For example Mehdi stated:

> The first few nights after the massacre of 1988, they had taken away the TV and every thing else... they'd killed and executed all of our friends and so on; it was a state of shock, spite, unpredictability, and the guys would cry without any reason. It was a bad situation like, you see people who lose their houses in the flood; we'd become like that.

Mina's example, which is presented in the following excerpt, also explained how women prisoners were influenced during this period:

> I was there for a year and a half after that, in different cellblocks. We weren't laughing anymore like before; we weren't joyful anymore. The sadness, in fact the mountains of Evin prison were very painful for us. It snowed a lot that year, and we were thinking that it's snowing on the guys who aren't with us anymore. For years I had a kind of feeling ...I always carry it with me.

For many of the participants, this event became the motivation for future activism. Amir for example stated: "I said we have to correctly talk about what happened... in details...."

The massacre of 1988 was another major turning point with significant implications. It was a salient event as it followed a period of "relative calm," during which the prisoners were vocal about their needs and wants, and punishment was minimal as compared to the preceding years. For example, by mid-1986, the prisoners were openly defying the wardens and a number of strikes such as one to remove repentant prisoners from among them had ended in success. The other vital aspect of this event was its portrayal of political trauma as pervasive, unpredictable, and chronic events, devastating individuals, families and entire communities. Lastly, this historical tragedy was important in regards to the legacy it left behind. By the end of the catastrophe, many "were determined to survive to bear witness and to remember everything and to forget nothing about the martyred" (Abrahamina, 1999, p. 173).

Post-Prison

Post-prison period was another major turning point; coming back into society posed new challenges. This turning point represented both a descent and an ascent in the stories. For Mojdeh, the time inside Iran and in exile were not separated while for others these two were looked at as two separate periods. Mojdeh for example stated: "I would make my post-prison one of the periods; meaning, inside and outside of the country, since in my view there hasn't been such a significant difference." The other participants delineated the exile experience from post-prison life in Iran. In speaking about life in exile, both descent and ascent were observed in the stories. Mehdi for example stated:

> If I can only be sure that they aren't going to do anything to me, I won't stay overseas for one second. I mean, my every moment of staying here is essentially my decline. I'm talking about myself; I don't know about others. Because this

place doesn't have any attractions for me, and the only thing is that I'm sure I don't die; I don't die a bad death here.

Another examples showed both a decline and an ascent in the life after prison, as in the case of Moneereh for instance:

> After I'm released from prison, I stayed in Iran for a short time, six months. Then, I come to Turkey, and then to Europe... This period is different in that I think, I mean, I feel that the person who comes out of prison at age 36, this person is different from the person she had been nine years prior to this. Somehow I feel she's become old... This new life... I begin a phase in which I start doing the things that were always like wishes that were vague and out of reach for me, like writing.

Not all participants viewed their post-migration experiences in exile similarly. While all saw leaving Iran as a step toward security and self-preservation, some found more positive attributes in living in a host country than did others. Mehdi, for example, focused on the loss of social support and uttered a persistent desire to return to Iran. On the other hand, Moneereh looked as her experience as an opportunity for taking steps toward new beginnings and learning experiences while also mentioning the lack of social support. Factors, which may have contributed to such differences in views about life in exile could have included length of stay in the country of host, level of social involvement, and previous experience of migration, as in the case of Moneereh.

To reiterate, embedded in this section was the analysis of turning points, illustrating what events, inspirational experiences, and ideas, which influenced the process of growth in the lives of activists participating in this study. Salient occurrences in each individual life were presented, and shared significant and formative events were illustrated. It was suggested that concrete patterns of thinking about social issues were formed in childhood. This thinking became more abstract during adolescence, and action

was taken at this stage. While adolescence was an important period of identity formation, it was not the end point of development; rather, it set the stage for later progression in political thought in adulthood.

The experiencing or witnessing of social injustice and inequalities in childhood allowed the participants to develop a concrete awareness about the existence of prejudice and disparity. During adolescence, these observations and first-hand knowledge were further reinterpreted in terms of what side they wished to be identified with and who they wished to be seen against. The participant's beliefs and actions during this time, therefore, were more the representative of their identity formation. During adulthood, the belief in justice and equality became more distinct. With the ability to imagine alternatives and a clearer understanding of systems, which maintained oppression, the participants began to take part in extensive political activities. Sociopolitical, historical, cultural, familial, and individual circumstances effected the process of becoming. The participants interpretation and re-interpretation of their parts in the present, helped them make meaning of their experiences of trauma before, during, and after imprisonment, and played a part in determining what their roles would be for the future.

Furthermore, it became apparent that imprisonment was the most important turning point in the lives of some of the participants. The period of imprisonment entailed traumatic and painful but deciding experiences out of which tremendous strength to tackle future challenges was born. This *development of resilience* was possible through relying on ones core beliefs while assimilating the painful experiences and coming to see them as events that opened a new phase of life and new opportunities.

Transcendent beliefs, which provided meaning and purpose beyond self grew out of these experiences.

Lastly, misogyny impacted the lives of the women activists in several ways. Awareness and/or first-hand knowledge of gender inequalities and violence against women put the women activists in a position to take a stand against these practices. In order to do so, these women had to overcome and stand up against the violence, which was aimed at silencing Iranian women as a whole. This, in some cases, meant fighting the obstacles put before them by the patriarchal structures within their own families, from which the male activists were exempt.

Mortazi-Langroodi (2003) held, "circumstances" are much worse for women activists because politically active men want their wives to comfort them at home but women activists cannot find such comfort and become lonelier day by day. She further asserted, "even male activists can not accept the presence of a woman activist beside them because they prefer to have a wife at home, who would run the household in their absence" (p. 1). For political involvement of women, Mortazi-Langroodi stated, there must first be equality in the family. Additionally, due to the cultural and religious beliefs about chastity and honor, women activists were further oppressed by the virtue of their gender. Meaning, use of rape, for example, as a mean of torture against women activists, put the seal of silence on the lips of many who were victims of such treatment. Women activists, therefore, had to pay a price for being an activist as well as being a woman.

Table 9

Turning Points in Mehdi's Life

Period/Age/Year	Events
Childhood	Special treatment by family; witnessing mother's pain and anguish; familiarity with gender inequality within family.
1977	Father's death; Friend's arrest; beginning to become aware of political issues.
1979	Revolution; joining political organization. Intergenerational legacy of political activities.
1980	Brother's death.
1982	Niece's arrest; brother's addiction; sister-in-law's heart attack; family losing face in neighborhood.
1984	Life in hiding begins; arrest an imprisonment.
1988	Massacre of political prisoners; release.
1997	Life in exile begins.

Table 9A

Turning Points in Bijan's Life

Period/Age/Year	Events
Age 6	Major medical condition.
Age 10/1956	Intergenerational legacy of political activity: relationship with grandmother, father, and cousin; change of worldview.
Age 16	Eye surgery; political activities in high school.
Age 19	Entering university: Taking part in student movement.
Age 22/ 1970-71	Change of worldview: believing in armed struggle.
1979	Revolution; organizational activity.
1982	Crackdown on Political organization.
1983	Arrest & imprisonment.
1986	Moving out of solitary confinement and entering public ward.
1989	Massacre of political prisoners. Release.
1991	Life in exile begins.

Table 9B

Turning Points in Effat's Life

Period/Age/Year	Events
Childhood	Discovering SES differences by observing differences in flowers of the rich vs. the less wealthy.
Age 7	Getting the attention she didn't get at home in school by achieving and showing leadership ability.
Age 8	Questioning God's existence in response to younger brother's untreatable deafness.
Age 11/ 1969	Reading the books of Samad Behrangi and being influenced by them; considering oneself political.
Age 12	Considering oneself a Communist.
Age 14	Brother's politically motivated arrest.
Age 15	First arrest by SAVAK. Receiving attention for being one of the rebel. New relationship with mother.
Age 17	University; active in student movement.
1979	Revolution; organizational activity.
1981	Husband's arrested and released; decision to have a child. Brother executed.
1984	2nd arrest of self and husband; miscarries in prison.
1988	Seeing 8th month-old baby in prison; Massacre of political prisoners; execution of husband
1990	Release.
1993	Life in exile begins.

Table 9C

Turning Points in Amir's Life

Period/Age/Year	Events
Age 6	Get attention from family because of intellectual abilities.
Age 8	Understanding the economics of the household.
Age 14 1964-5	Questioning Islam/Namaz, and putting them aside. Beginning to think about philosophy/sociopolitical issues; attending the meetings of the intellectuals 15-16. Intergenerational legacy of political activity.
11th / 12th Grade	Familiartiy with Marxism.
Age 18 1972	Entering university: Questioning what we want and seeing Socialism as the answer; beginning political activities; leadership in student movement.
1976	First arrest by SAVAK.
1979	Revolution; release from prison after 2 ½ years; begins organizational activity.
1983	Crackdown on organizations; change in living conditions; 2nd arrest & imprisonment.
1985-86	Change in prison system.
1988	Massacre of political prisoners; release.
1989	Life in exile begins.

Table 9D

Turning Points in Hormoz's Life

Period/Age/Year	Events
Childhood	Brother's death: Intergenerational legacy of political activity.
Age 7	Feeling discrimination in school based on SES.
1967-68 Age 16	Failed 9th grade/change of school. Influenced by politically minded teacher. First sparks of political attraction; begins to read books.
Age 17	Begins political activities. Arrest of two friends in relation to politics. Familiar with cultural groups.
1970	Familiarity with struggle in Latin America. Fadayian attack Siahkal Gendarmerie. Starts political group.
1971	First arrest by SAVAK.
1977	Transferred to prison in Tabriz; Carter's push for human rights issues in Iran.
1979	Revolution; release from prison; begins more extensive organizational activities.
1981	Crackdown on organizations: limiting organizational activities.
1982	2nd arrest along with wife.
1988	Massacre of political prisoners; release from prison.
1997	Life in exile begins.

Table 9E

Turning Points in Mojdeh's Life

Period/Age/Year	Events
Childhood	Intergenerational legacy of political activity: relationship with parents and siblings.
Age 9	Questioning Communism.
Age 12	Junior High: influenced by teacher; book readings; takes part in strike in school.
1979	Revolution; expelled from high school; begins organizational activity.
1981	Crackdown on Political organizations; change in living situation.
Age 19	Arrest & imprisonment.
1982	
1988	Massacre of political prisoners.
1990	Release.
1996	Life in exile begins.

Table 9F

Turning Points in Mina's Life

Period/Age/Year	*Events*
Childhood	Intergenerational legacy of political activity; relationship with parents.
1972	Family's financial hardship; beginning to help father. Feeling gender inequality on a personal level in the
Age 11	family. Hearing news of student movement/strikes and objections.
Junior High	Responsibility for the household increased. Increased self-esteem. Increased autonomy. Trials of the Shah's
Age 13-15	political opposition. Stopped and by the SAVAK during crackdown on Fadayian. Increased awareness of and objecting to gender inequalities in the family.
Age 16	Familiarity with the left movement and awareness of SAVAK's control in the schools.
1979	Revolution; begins organizational activity.
1981	Crackdown on Political organizations; 1st arrest and release in May; 2nd arrest in October.
1986	Change in prison system; reunited with friends in prison after 5 years.
1988	Massacre of political prisoners.
1990	Release from prison.
1996	Life in exile begins

Table 9G

Turning Points in Mitra's Life

Period/Age/Year	Events
Childhood	Intergenerational legacy of political activity; relationship with father; religious beliefs.
Age 15	Change of worldview: teacher, friend, and friend's father.
Age 18	Entering university: Student movement, believing in armed struggle.
1974	. . . .
1976	Change in political view; familiarity with Tudeh Party; moving away from belief in armed struggle.
1977	Organizational activity; expelled from university; work in publishing.
1979	Revolution; expansion of organizational activity.
1982	Crackdown on Tudeh Party.
1983	Arrest & imprisonment.
1988	Massacre of political prisoners.
1990	Release; decision to leave country.
1992	Life in exile begins.

Table 9H

Turning Points in Moneereh's Life

Period/Age/Year	Events
Childhood Age 11	Father's death; migration; loss of economic security; sociopolitical issues entering the family; Intergenerational legacy of political activity: relationship with siblings.
Age 16 1972	Brother's politically motivated arrest; politically motivated arrest of cousins. Issues turning from intellectual to more acute issues like imprisonment.
Age 17-18	Entering university: Political autonomy. Taking part in student movement. Change of worldview: believing that atheism, and the Left movement.
Age 18-19	Arrest of sister and cousins. Thinking clearer about the consequences of political activism.
1979	First arrest by SAVAK: meeting the Fadayian in prison; Revolution; release from prison; begins organizational activity
1981	Crackdown on Political organizations; 2nd arrest.
1988	Massacre of political prisoners.
1990	Life in exile begins; new level of activism: writing of first memoir.

The last part of this chapter offers a summary of my experience through the completion of this study.

Personal Reflections

In chapter III, I have written: reflexivity is referred to being conscious of oneself as one sees oneself. It is a socially constructed process of self *bending back* on one's experiences (Mead, 1962, as cited in Steier, 1991) through which self may become different as a result of its *self-pointing* (Steier, 1991). I began this project with the acknowledgement and the recognition that I had a genuine interest in the outcome of this study, and though it was not about which direction the outcome would be, it was an interest, which had resulted from my own values, experiences of political activism and persecution in Iran, forced migration, exile, and loss.

Though I was only vaguely aware of this fact at the beginning, for me, completing this project was the journey of reclaiming parts of my *self*, which had been discontinued and repressed in the face of political trauma and forced migration. While I had begun the study with the aim of giving voice to the people who had experienced political trauma in the most horrifying and tormenting fashion, in the process of completing this work, I realized that, in truth, the participants had unwittingly helped me find my voice, not only as a researcher but as an individual whose identity had long ago been intertwined with that of theirs. As I asked them to put the pieces of their lives together, from childhood to present, to form a meaningful whole, through a parallel process, I remembered who I was. This, a powerful retrieval of identity, has forever changed how I see and understand

myself. Stronger in my convictions, I have come to embrace the two main cultures that have shaped and influenced my life.

In relation to the participants, I was honored and humbled as they trusted and accepted me to be a witness to their lives. For some, their interview with me was the first time they had ever told their stories. This privilege, made me aware of two realities: It put me in the position of great responsibility for transferring their information as best as I could in this limited work; it also confirmed the scarcity of, and therefore, the need for both research and clinical practice related to this field, and especially with this particular population.

I believe that completion of this project does not end my work, and even after this research is finalized, my efforts will not cease, as the work of these activists will continue. I will continue to write and present the parts of this research that I was not able to include in the final results due to limitations posed by participant selection criteria or other limitations in the methodology. Lastly, but most importantly, I will continue to cherish and hold with great respect the friendships I made through the composition of this project.

Summary

This chapter offered the results of this study. Mutual themes, which were used to construct the categories and the subcategories as well as the results of the analysis of turning points were presented. The following chapter will comprise of the discussion of the results, including the limitations of the study such as issues concerning language and translation, implications, future directions, and conclusions.

CHAPTER VI

Discussion and Conclusions

This research examined the impact of political violence on the lives of the survivors of torture from Iran, giving voice to this forgotten, but deserving group of citizens of the world. In this chapter, a discussion regarding the findings of this qualitative investigation is offered. The theoretical implications in conceptualizing trauma and resilience as well as the social utility of this study are discussed. Additionally, an argument is made to address the imperative implications for the field of mental health, with reference to training and practice of psychology. Also, the limitations of the current study, and directions for future research are conferred. In closing, some final remarks are offered.

Based on the premise of narrative approach, which asserts that human activity and experience are filled with meaning, and that stories rather than logical arguments or lawful formulations are the vehicle by which that meaning is communicated, I set out to generate knowledge about how a group of Iranian survivors of political torture made sense of their traumatic experiences, and how they explained their proactive work for the protection of rights of others. This investigation, therefore, was designed to concentrate on how these individuals constructed their stories, how they talked about their lives as related to the torture and imprisonment experiences, how they articulated the personal,

and psychosocial effects of their trauma, and what they perceived as having helped them cope in the midst of dehumanizing torment.

In constructing the questions, I was mindful of the importance of *re-creating the flow* of the participants' lives and resorting a sense of continuity with the past. Hence, the interview questions were designed to assist the participants in restoration of their life stories through the narration of life before their trauma and portrayal of the circumstances that led up to the traumatic events related to the political oppression in Iran. The participants were encouraged to talk about their important relationships, their convictions and desires, and their struggles, thereby providing a context within which the particular meaning of the trauma and resilience could be understood. Through the analysis, the importance of formation of worldview and development of identity within social domain became evident.

In narrating their experiences of childhood, youth, and adulthood, the participants referred to historical and sociopolitical context of the country, which influenced the progression of their thoughts and convictions at each stage of life. Furthermore, important events, which were determining turning points in the lives of the participants emerged.

In exploring their life stories, the larger scene of the historical, social, and political conditions of the country emerged. Thus, indicating that their stories and reflections on torture, imprisonment and political activism were entangled with the larger level of social and political descriptions. In accordance with this, I provided a history of Iran, to enclose the experiences of the participants and to give a contextual framework for understanding their stories.

Implications for the Study of Trauma and Resilience

The contributions of this study to the body of literature, which already exists on trauma and resilience is through the development of theory. This investigation contributed to the study of culture-specific approaches to trauma and resilience. By conducting the interviews in the language of survivors, this study uncovered the personal accounts that have been developed within the available language in the Iranian context. My analysis of the ways in which the participants made meaning out of the "sequences" of their traumatic encounters took into account the collective and personal dimensions of the coping processes. I approached the question of how people remain hopeful and resistant as they experience dehumanizing conditions, which attempt to break down all of their defenses and change their identities, from both dimensions of individual and communal.

I also approached the participants' narratives with the underlying assumption in narrative research that "there is neither a single, absolute truth in human reality nor one correct reading or interpretation of a text" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zibler, 1998). I focused on how the participants constructed the self as they narrated their life stories using the language that was available to them in forming of the self and identity. In looking at their stories of trauma and resilience, "the systematic organization of their reality was maintained" as they told their individual stories in relation to, and within the Iranian cultural, historical, and sociopolitical context.

The analysis of narratives illustrated the patriarchal nature of Iranian society, gender inequality within the family system, and the progression of chauvinistic views in regard to women under the rule of the Islamic Republic. It became evident that while

Iranian women in general suffered from these inequalities, the women activists were subjugated by the unfair social system as well as the violent treatment of political opposition.

Through analysis, the pervasive nature of trauma in Iran emerged, showing that political repression in Iran poses continued traumatic experiences, and indicating that the meaning of political trauma in this context could not be captured by the notion of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Traumatic experiences occurred in a sequence, making the concept of *post* trauma an inadequate model when conceptualizing the experiences of these participants. This idea was congruent with that of Becker's (2001), who stated that the PTSD concept is deficient in that it suggests the traumatic event is limited to a specific incident that has taken place in the past.

Furthermore, the analysis highlighted that trauma did not end once the individual's imprisonment was finalized. With a persistent nature, traumatic experiences continued to occur after release, for example, in the form of surveillance by the authorities, unemployment, and so forth. Following the departure from the country, which was a survival strategy, still, the participants experienced life in exile, and the post-migration stressors such as loss of identity, relationships, and support systems. This emphasized the premise that for displaced survivors of oppression, the recovery not only involves understanding the context of the trauma, but also the appreciation for the loss of not only self but every thing that defines self and life in general, the connections, the familiar places, and the familiar language through which one could define oneself.

The analysis also illustrated consequences of torture and imprisonment, which effected the psychological, physical, and psychosocial aspects of the individuals' lives. It

further showed that the torment, which was aimed at destroying the individual, also effected families and communities. Confusing the public during arrest and at the time of the release of the activists, the secret use of torture, public recantations, mass killing of the prisoners, and splitting the families all illustrated the use of *psychological warfare* by the regime. Due to the socio-cultural, religious, economic, and other devastating consequences of these atrocities, families lost face, parents became paralyzed, children became orphans, and the political repression, which was mirrored in prisons, silenced entire communities.

What emerged further from the analysis was indicative of the complexity of the individual experience of trauma, pointing to its relation to an array of social and political factors, for instance, the political organizations' limitations. This in turn illuminated the importance of the role of historical aspects of political life in the development, or lack of, Left Movement in Iran and its dialectical relation to the traumatic experiences of the individuals.

Taking the aforementioned analysis into consideration, in the context of political repression in Iran, application of the following concepts, including the notion of *extreme traumatization* is more meaningful:

> Extreme traumatization is an individual and collective process that refers to and is dependent on a given social context; a process that is marked by its intensity, its extremely long duration, and the interdependency between the social and the psychological dimensions. Its aim is the destruction of the individual, of his sense of belonging to society and of his social activities" (Becker & Castillo, 1990, as cited in Becker, 2001. p. 6).

In addition, recent work in Latin America has established that traumatization is not only an individual process but also a social process that refers to the society as a whole. These studies have also shown that trauma can only be understood within a specific cultural and political context (Becker, 2001).

These ideas are similar to the concept of *social trauma*. Social trauma is the term used by Martin-Baro (1996) to refer to the long lasting and extreme effects of political persecution. Martin-Baro asserted, although trauma is manifested in individual people, it is more appropriate to speak of it as a product of inhumane relationships. I propose that while the individual traumatic experiences of the participants cannot be ignored, these experiences should be looked at within the specific cultural and political Iranian context.

These findings once more challenged the notion of PTSD. As Becker (2001) suggested, family diagnosis is impossible within PTSD categories. "A torture victim, for example, can have PTSD, but his wife and children can't, even if their symptoms can only be understood in the context of the destruction of the victim" (p. 3). He further stated that there is considerable data to confirm that trauma can be transmitted transgenerationally from parents to their children; however, PTSD diagnosis does not deal with this phenomenon.

I addressed the development of resilience by looking at the participants' lives before their experiences of arrest, torture, and imprisonment, and looked at their relationships, and their patterns of coping in the face of adversity when growing up. The analysis illustrated that the individual's traumatic experiences and their dealings with adversity did not occur in a vacuum; in addition, it showed that the participants' perception about themselves and the world was influenced by the effects of

intergenerational legacies, community, individuals, culture, and political atmosphere. This supported Walsh's (1998) assertion that "all concepts of the self and constructions of the world are fundamentally products of relationships, and it is through our interdependence that meaningful lives are best sustained" (p. 51).

Through the analysis of the narratives, individual and collective coping strategies emerged. This showed the power of community, including that of prison inmates, family, and the larger society, in healing the individual and the effect of individual actions in creating hope within communities. The concept of collective trauma emerged, illuminating that fear and hopelessness was diffused when the community shared the same predicament, even in the face of possibility of death. Hernandez (2002) talked about *collective resilience*, defining it as the coping processes that arise in reference to and dependent on a given social context, including counteracting process that leads to social trauma. She asserted, "These processes aim to rebuild and sustain social relationships to heal the wounds of trauma, the losses of war and the reconstruction of a sense of belonging and personal identity."

The resilience of the participants against severe conditions during imprisonment pointed to the protective role of belief systems and political ideology. The narrative analysis showed that even under extreme conditions, the individuals were able to resist by relying on their convictions and beliefs. Through her concept of belief systems, Walsh (1998) emphasized the role of affiliative beliefs and the importance of facilitative appraisal of crisis in helping individuals and communities in dealing with adversity. Analysis of the participants' narratives illustrated the role of affilliative belief in

resistance. This was highlighted in the narratives about self-expectations and the expectations of others from the individual.

In further analyzing the participants' narratives I focused on how they re-evaluated their belief systems, which played roles in their decision making process about their affiliations, activities, and course of action before their imprisonment. I focused on how they transformed their pain into personal statement and positive action. Wiesel (1995, as cited in Walsh, 1998) stated, to remember, "is to live in more than one world, to prevent the past from fading, and to call upon the future to illuminate it" (p. 49). The participants asserted the need to remember the lives that were lost, knowing in order to do this, they needed to live with memories that were unpleasant and painful. This theme, which I called "historical memory," illustrated their convictions about and advocacy for justice, truth, and prevention of future violation of human rights. This theme highlighted the meaning the participants made of their adversity and survival, and the actions they are taking today.

Social Contributions

The social implications of this study are embedded in its contribution to the defense of human rights in Iran and elsewhere in the world, and its potential role in redirecting social debate and governmental programs. In the face of indifference and passivity of national and international bystanders to the plight of survivors of torture in Iran and in other non-democratic countries, this study provided an opportunity for survivors of political trauma from Iran to tell their stories. The knowledge generated from this study can assist in the collaborative effort between communities and

governmental and grassroots organizations to develop models and policies towards defense of human rights, early warning, prevention, reconciliation, and reconstruction.

Through providing the means for the participants to tell their accounts, and by identifying with the plight of these survivors, the human rights situation in Iran, and the commitment to change the cycle of oppression in that country, I was able to facilitate the process of story telling, which for some was the first experiences of disclosure since their release. This study therefore provided a first step, a forum, for amplification of the voices of these activists, further facilitating open social discourse about the plight of these individuals.

The images of the tortures and dehumanization, and the memory of the massacre of political prisoners is vivid in the minds of these survivors, but it is given little attention by the world community and is entirely denied by the Theocratic regime of Iran. One of the tasks of this research was to spark social debate regarding the atrocities committed in Iran, in addition to bringing attention to factors, which enable individuals collectively and individually, to resist oppression. With a greater understanding of the psychological, cultural, political, and societal roots of human cruelty, war, and other forms of mass violence we can develop policies, strategies, and programs designed to counteract these atrocities and build strategies for reconciliation and reconstruction of communities. Furthermore, by understanding the mechanisms involved in resilience, we can foster this key process in overcoming the effects of trauma in individuals, families and larger communities.

Implications for Practice of Psychology

Psychology has often contributed to obscuring the relationship between personal estrangement and social oppression, presenting the pathology of persons as if it were something removed from history and society, and behavioral disorders as if they played themselves out entirely in the individual plane. (Martin- Baro, 1996, p. 27)

The findings of this study, as depicted in the narratives of the participants, are the declarations and the testimonies to the need for integration of political analysis and clinical practice when working with populations effected by repressive systems and sociopolitical violence. Political psychology, Martin-Baro stated, examines a broader range of behaviors by taking into consideration the social order as well as the manner in which each behavior responds to particular class interests represented within the social structure (Martin-Baro, 1988, as cited in Martin- Baro, 1996). Thus, political psychology attempts to clarify the meaning of internal psychological processes while paying special attention to their deep roots in the larger social context, and "to take account of these connections whether they are direct and immediate or indirect and mediated by other factors" (Martin- Baro, 1996, p. 96).

While political psychology does not propose disregarding the gains of traditional psychology, it challenges the deficiencies of the dominant theories, which most often than not isolate psychological processes from the sociopolitical context that produce these processes and continue to shape them. Political psychology holds that people who have experienced political repression under cruel conditions are likely to suffer from being stigmatized as ill and thus deprive from their human dignity, and traditional

approaches in psychology may play a role in the chain of events and interpretations leading to a loss of basic sense of worth in survivors.

Trauma of political persecution is systematic and prolonged, affecting individuals and communities at multiple levels. It is important for the mental health professionals, who work with survivors of political oppression to interpret their symptoms as an understandable response to pathogenic systems of tyranny. This calls for the recognition of the devastating effects of trauma and the right to humane treatment, in addition to the recognition that the effects of political persecution surpasses the individual and is felt at the social level.

Political oppression silences individuals, and sends fear across communities, suggesting that recovery for survivors of politically based trauma not only begins with personal revival but also involves healing at the level of community. Responding to the plight of victims of political repression requires understanding of the primary experiences, the trauma of torture, political psychology, and the cross-cultural paradigms treatment. When working with survivors of political oppression, it is essential to understand the historical and the social dynamics that have injured people and exist in a mediated interaction between individual and society (Martin-Baro, 1996).

Becker (2001) also suggested that in each different social context people should create their own definitions of trauma within a framework, in which the basic focus is not so much on the symptoms of a person but on the sequential development of the traumatic situation. He further asserted that while it is important to take inventory of the specific symptoms of a patient, for the metaphoric message the symptoms convey about the illness, the main approach must focus on the oppressive encounters.

Part of what mental health professionals can do to assist both distressed individuals and distressed societies is to endorse the link between psychological recovery and societal reparation and justice. Thus, it is important that the trauma debate be conducted within a human rights framework and not as if it is just a new specialty (Summerfield, 1995, p. 28).

According to Becker (2001), the treatment of extreme trauma neither begins nor ends in a therapist's room; however, therapy may become the first social space in which the victims might begin to overcome their difficulties. Therapists cannot present not to be involved in the conflicts with moral and political implications: to a certain extent, their choice in these conflicts determines their treatment strategies. Summerfield (1995) suggested that some torture victims seek psychological help, but all of them seek justice (p. 25). To this end, the therapists and the researchers who work with people victimized by war, violence, repression, disaster, and loss are effected by the stories of the survivors. The therapist is no longer neutral, independent expert but gets involved in questions and perplexities that touch her or him personally.

According to Herman (1997), working with the survivors of trauma requires a committed moral stance. The therapist is called upon to bear witness to a crime. Neutrality of the therapist, Herman stated, is not auspicious for the process of healing in this context. The therapist must assert position of solidarity with the survivor. Therapy involves the understanding of the fundamental injustice of the traumatic experience and the need for a resolution that restores some sense of justice. In further explaining this notion, Herman referred to Danieli's approach to treatment of Holocaust survivors stating she assumes this moral stance even in routine process of taking family history.

When survivors speak of their relatives who 'died,' he affirms that they were, rather, 'murdered.' The use of the word death to describe the fate of the survivors' relatives, friends, and communities appears to be a defense against acknowledging murder as possibly the most crucial reality of the Holocaust. (p. 135)

Clinicians must keep in mind that torture and imprisonment are only parts of what survivors have experienced. Therapy should help these individuals reconnect the disconnected pieces of their lives and to reconstruct the parts of self that is crushed by the trauma. So, the healing process should focus on strengths, instilling hope and helping the survivors find ways best suited to their needs. Empowerment must be central in the therapy process if it is to succeed.

Walsh (1998) talked about a resilience-based approach to practice. She stated, such methodological stance involves individuals collaboratively while affirming their strengths and upholding their dignity. She stated that this approach further encourages their optimal functioning, and builds social network, providing a balances for the traditional clinical focus on patient deficits, which too often leads professionals to underestimate the resourcefulness of the survivors.

According to Hernandez (2002), therapy should entail a collaborative mission for understanding the life stories of survivors, helping them in the process of recomposing new stories after suffering the damaging effects of upheaval and disruption. She further asserted, through description of their experiences, some of the most taboo aspects, such as shame, guilt, self-blame, can be acknowledged, worked through, and re-conceptualized.

Beristain and Riera (1992, as cited in Hernandez, 2002) emphasize the importance of the role of community support and *webs of solidarity* in societies in which relationships and togetherness are more vital than a strong sense of individuality. This brings attention to the concept of *dard-e dell* within the Iranian culture. *Dard-e dell*, literally meaning pain of heart, refers to the ritual of confiding in a trustworthy individual or individuals about issues that are distressing and painful. Survivors of extreme trauma often find themselves alone and unable to talk about their horrifying experiences. Similarly, it is not easy for the survivors of torture from Iran to *dard-e del* to others. In the context of therapy, therefore, a group approach to recovery becomes indispensable for these individuals. "Mirrored in the action of others, the survivor recognizes and reclaims a lost part of herself" (Herman, 1997, p. 215).

To reiterate, therapy must take place and the problems should be examined in the social, political, and family of origin context. Education regarding the devastating effects of oppression, including oppression of women, classism, and power abuses should be provided for community groups to grant permission for the discourse about the unspeakable to take place. Healing can only take place when a sense of justice is accomplished. In joining the survivors, treatment must also involve advocacy for the truth and human rights. Providing a forum in therapy for the testimonies of the survivors to be heard also involves supporting their efforts to make their voices public collectively and to reaffirm their dignity.

Implications for the Training of Psychologists

Psychology is in a unique position to make a significant contribution to the understanding of the psychosocial roots of the trauma of torture, war, and other forms of oppression, and to address the consequences of these conditions. While the psychology's role in assessment, intervention, and treatment of refugees and survivors of torture and extreme conflict is undoubtedly evident, topics related to human rights, war, ethnopolitical violence, and genocide are most often ignored in psychology education. This leaves mental health professionals unprepared to meet the psychosocial needs of those within the larger international community experiencing the trauma associated with these conflicts either in their homelands or as refugees; it further impedes their effort to contribute to pre-conflict prevention, or play a role in post-conflict resolution.

This study points out, on the level of education of psychology, the importance of integration of issues such as the fundamental human rights, extreme trauma and displacement and its impact on child development, refugee mental health, torture, mass violence, ethnopolitical conflict, war and the concepts of resilience and peace psychology into the programs for psychologists in training. It also declares that these topics must be taught within the social and political contexts in which they occur and not as mere theoretical concepts. This knowledge may lead future psychologists to greater understanding of the cognitive, affective, social, cultural, and societal roots of human cruelty and trauma. Furthermore, with this knowledge psychologists are more likely to accept the mantle of social responsibility, become actively involved as citizens within the global community, and foster healing in the individual and at the level of community.

Limitations and Future Directions

The limitations of this study are looked at from the point of view of qualitative research; hence, it is understood that this study does not have application of generalizability. Within the framework of qualitative research, this study's limitations entail the following:

One of the limitations of this study involved the issue of language and translation, which included translating from Persian to English and vice-versa. For example, there was no exact word for resilience in Persian, which was the language of the survivors. The word *bargasht-Paziri* or *enetaf-paziri*, which were translations of resilience in Persian in the dictionary (Bateni, 1997) did not encompass the meaning of this word in its entirety. Therefore, resilience was also explained to the participants as "the ability to bounce back and to reconstruct," and "the ability to stand on one's feet again in the aftermath of trauma and adversity." In addition, due to limitations posed by time and resources, I conducted all the translations of the interviews myself, and the transcripts were not translated back into their original language and back into English again.

Sample selection posed limitations in that the participants were only selected from a group of former political prisoners nominated by another activist, based on the opinion of this person, their current participation in advocacy for the human rights, and the investigator's literature-based explanations of ways of coping. Therefore, no fixed criteria for resilience, except for participation in human rights activities, were set to determine who was resilient and who was not.

The study further posed limitations in terms of exclusions of certain political and religious groups; specifically, the study only included former political prisoners who at

least at the time of their imprisonment, adhered to a non-religious, leftist ideology. In the process of participant selection, one of the participants was mistakenly thought to have been imprisoned for his affiliation with a leftist organization, and it was not until the time of his interview that I realized he had in fact, at the time of his arrest, had been affiliated with the Mojahedin. Therefore, while I conducted an interview with him, I did not include his narrative in the analysis. This brings up an important issue in the study of effects of political oppression in Iran, illuminating the painful reality that the groups, who suffered torture and imprisonment, were manifold, all requiring and deserving investigative and rehabilitative attention. Future studies should attempt at conducting research with this as well as other groups of survivors of political oppression from Iran.

This examination of life stories generated enormous amount of data. Multitudes of themes emerged from the participants' narratives, and while all were of great value, the inclusion of all themes in the final analysis was outside of the scope of this study. For example, the participants talked about different levels and types of repentance. The study of this theme requires scrutinizing the nature of the perpetrators and the dynamics between them and the victims, taking into account the personal, political, and socio-cultural dimensions, which contributed to this phenomenon. Later analysis should pay attention to this theme.

In addition to the phenomenon of repentance, some of the participants referred to another occurrence, which they called "prison in prison." The examination of this theme, which referred to the resentments and antipathy among the prisoners from different opposition groups inside prison, was also outside of the scope of this study. This important aspect of prison life should be looked at closely in future investigations.

Scrutinizing the nature of the individuals who took part in the daily torment of political prisoners, the executions of 1981 and the massacre of 1988 was outside of the domain of this investigation. Gaining knowledge about the nature of people who become active participants in oppressive systems and take part in mass killings and genocides, such as those in Iran, Rwanda, Germany, Bosnia, and other parts of the world, may aid in pinpointing identifiable factors that determine whether a given combination of historical, sociological, economic, political, and cultural conditions will or will not lead to mass killing and persecution. Understanding such causes of persecution could help in facilitating the reconstruction of damaged psyches, indignant social relations, and wounded communities.

This study only looked at the stories of survival from the point of view of those who had escaped the continuous state of political repression in Iran and were residing in a host country. It is foreseeable that effects of torture and imprisonment and the kind of meaning survivors make of these experiences may manifest themselves variably in those who continue to live under a state of siege. Investigating the plight of those individuals is of grave essentiality if psychology is to facilitate transformation and healing at the level of community.

Lastly, the literature on the consequences of torture documents various types of head trauma as reported by the victims. Even as torture rehabilitation is recognized as an area of sub-specialization within health care (Jaranson, 1998), the neuropsychological aspects of assessment and rehabilitation are nowhere to be found. Clinical neuropsychology has the potential to make contributions to the assessment and documentation of consequences of torture. The epidemic proportions of torture and the

high incidence of traumatic brain injury among survivors should be seen as an appeal to neuropsychologists to lend their expertise for the benefit and the welfare of these most deserving individuals, and to strengthen efforts toward prevention.

Concluding Remarks

The recent history of the world has been marked by unparalleled human rights violations, sociopolitical violence, wars and mass killings, making the extermination, torture, and mistreatment of whole groups of people a central issue of our times. This study examined the consequences of human rights violations in Iran through narrative analysis of life stories of a group of leftist activists from that country. It also set to find how these people made sense of their trauma, coped with and transformed their experiences.

Despite its limitations, this research clearly showed that trauma can only be understood and addressed with reference to the specific context in which it occurs, and that

> traumatic experience needs to be conceptualized in terms of a dynamic, two-way interaction between the victimized individual and the surrounding society, evolving over time, and not only as a relatively static, circumscribable entity to be located and addressed within transforming individual traumatic experience. (Summerfield, 1995, p. 22)

This study offered a perspective for the study of political trauma. It pointed out that in the context of political repression, where families and entire communities experience traumatic events and their consequences, the concept of PTSD is a deficient

notion. Labeling individuals for societal problems or organized political violence, and pathologizing the survivors as opposed to looking at the circumstances that brought them to this point may further alienate individuals and communities who are aware of the debilitating effects of the oppressive systems within which they live.

The study further revealed that the participants went beyond their given situations even when their life experiences sought to silence them. It demonstrated that individuals have the capacity to overcome the limitations imposed upon them by oppression. For this group, this meant to overcome the daily torments of an oppressive system that aimed to destroy their humanity.

Trauma work has the potential to be an important factor in helping people deal with the consequences of organized violence throughout the world if it is conducted in a responsible way and developed with reference to the specific cultural context. Trauma work needs to be part of an integrated approach, always addressing both the individual and the collective aspects. To be done effectively, support structures are needed on a national and international level. "In that sense, we should try to avoid turning trauma work into an international business, but rather defend the possibility of international solidarity" (Becker, 2001, pp. 18-19).

We are not the tired prisoners of this land;

the tired prisoners of this land are others;

the tired prisoners of this land are in the chains of labor and factories of the oppressor;

today, the "red sorrows" of the oppressed are the tired prisoners of "the prison-country;"

we are not the tired prisoners of this land.

A poem by Saiid Soltanpour, an Iranian poet and activist, who was among the first group of political prisoners executed in 1981 by the Islamic Republic.

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Appendix A

Participant Consent Form (English)

Participant Informed Consent

Dear Potential Research Participant:

Your time and willingness to consider participating in this research is greatly appreciated. I am a 3rd year student in the Counseling Psychology Doctoral Program at Seton Hall University, who is conducting the present research for completion of her doctoral dissertation. The purpose of this study is to examine how a group of Iranian survivors of political torture make sense of their trauma, survival and proactive work for the rights of others. This research may contribute to the greater understanding of consequences of trauma and process of resilience. You will be asked to participate in an interview with the principal investigator, which may take approximately 2 to 4 hours of your time.

You will be asked to talk about you life story including your experiences of imprisonment and life in exile. All interviews will be audiotaped and then transcribed for research purposes. These tapes will be transcribed only by the principal investigator with the assistance of two research assistants, Dr. Keyvandokht Nikfar and Ms. Madeiran Namin. Upon transcription of the tape, you will have the option to review the transcript of your interview for your feedback and comments to your interview. All identifying information will be removed from the translation and all names will be changed for confidentiality purposes. Results of this study may be presented at conferences or published at the discretion of the researcher.

The questions which you will be asked are intended to help gain more information about the processes involved in trauma and recovery. It is hoped that this information will better inform all professionals involved in the field of trauma to more effectively realize the needs of survivors of politically based trauma, torture, and other forms of organized violence. Should you feel undue stress during completion of any of the interview you may discontinue at any time without any form of penalty and the investigator will provide debriefing for you at that time. Debriefing will also be provided for you after the interview is completed. Following the completion of the interview and debriefing, should you experience any grief, stress, or distress, you are encouraged to contact the investigators or other mental health professionals for assistance. The principal investigator will contact you one day, one week, two weeks, and three weeks after the interview to ensure that you are not experiencing grief and distress.

Should you have any questions or would like a copy of the results, please feel free to contact Nouriman Ghahary, M.A., Principle Investigator (001-201-818-6771; ghaharno@shu.edu) or her doctoral supervisor/mentor, Laura Palmer, Ph.D. (001-973 275-2740. palmerla@shu.edu). If you should have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact, Seton Hall University, Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research at (001-973- 275-2974).

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights.

The Chairperson on the IRB may be reached through the Office of Grants and Research Services. The telephone number of the Office is (001-973- 275-2974).

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. I sincerely hope that you will take some time out of your busy schedule to assist with this project. *Your informed consent implied if you decide to complete the interview with the principal investigator.* Thank you for your time, attention, and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Nouriman Ghahary, Doctoral Student

Appendix B

Researcher's Background (English)

Dear Participant,

Allow me to introduce myself to you. I am an Iranian woman who is a psychology doctoral candidate. Born and raised in Iran, I came to the United States in 1983. Previous to my abrupt, involuntary departure from Iran, I was a political activist in the Left Movement, and experienced oppression on multiple levels. I have been living in exile for the past 19 years, trying to turn my adversity into a social commitment to take action in regards to the rights of those whose voices cannot be heard, and a professional commitment for advocacy, education and treatment of victims of social and political violence. More specifically, in the period during which I have lived in exile, I have familiarized myself intimately with the issues of human rights abuses such as use of torture with political prisoners in Iran. While my interests were initially embedded within a nationalistic boundary, they have gradually developed, moving into a broader international context. Equipped with psychological training in research and practice, I hope to use my acquired knowledge in the service of abolishing the abuses of human rights worldwide through contributions to upholding, research, and treatment of survivors of "crimes" against humanity. Conducting this study therefore becomes a first major step for me in fulfilling this commitment to bring knowledge about the "unspoken" and the "unknown" to surface and to mobilize social discourse.

I thank you for your time and attention to this important research project, and I am grateful that you have accepted my offer to share your life experiences with me.

Sincerely,

Nouriman Ghahary

Appendix C

Original Set of Interview Questions (English)

- Every person's life story can be written in a book. If you were to think that your life was a book, how many chapters would it have, what would you name each one, and what would be an overview of each chapter? What is your reason for ending each chapter?

- Tell me about your family (parents, siblings, class, ethnicity, education, extended family). How would you describe your parents' style of child rearing and their treatment of you specifically? If your family had a motto, what would it be? What messages did you hear within your family when growing up?

- When and how did you become aware of sociopolitical problems in Iran? (What specific event(s)/people were influential in this process)?

- What were your values, political convictions and your social views at that time?

- What are your values, political convictions and your social views at this time?

- How are these affected by your experience of torture?

- Tell me about your life at the threshold of 1979 Revolution (age, occupation. Etc.)

- Tell me about your life from 1979 to the year of your arrest.

- Talk about your prison experience. (Arrest [how & when], torture, trial, years in prison, relationships (positive/negative), release, other information may want to share).

- How would you describe the effects of torture on your overall life? (Emotional, social, relational, and physical)

- What kind of support systems (imagined or real) did you have during your imprisonment? What type of support system have you had since your release from prison?

- Tell me about your life in exile: Opportunities, hardships, friendships, work, school, language, family, prejudice, etc.... What kind of support system do you have now while in exile?

- Looking back at your life, what do you think has helped you have maintain hope while imprisoned, and in the aftermath of your experience of torture?

- What do you think your survival in the midst of political violence in Iran means?

- Given your experience of torture and imprisonment, what do your current state of activities, as related to creating change in the human rights condition in Iran, mean to you?

- What is you outlook for the future?

- Is there anything else you would like to share about being a survivor of torture, who continues the fight for the rights of others? Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix D

Interview Questions (Persian)

<div dir="rtl">

پرسشهاي مصاحبه

- زندگي هر كسي ميتواند در كتابي نوشته شود. من ميخواهم از شما خواهش كنم كه تصور كنيد بر آنيد زندگيتان را تا اين مقطع در كتابي بنويسيد. اين كتاب از بدو تولد تا اكنون شامل چند فصل ميشود؟ هر فصل از چه سني شروع و به چه سني خاتمه پيدا ميكند؟ عنوان هر فصل چيست؟ دليلتان براي خاتمه هر فصل چيست؟
- راجع به زندگي خود در مقطع انقلاب بگوييد.
- راجع به زندگيتان از بدو انقلاب تا زمان بازداشت بگوييد.

محيط خانواده

- راجع به خانوادهتان صحبت كنيد (پدر و مادر/ خواهر و برادر/ طبقه اجتماعي آنان/ قوميت/ سطح تحصيلات/ رابطه با ديگر اعضاي فاميل).

- روش تربيتي پدر و مادر خود به ويژه در رابطه با خودتان را چگونه توصيف ميكنيد؟

- اگر خانواده شما شعاري (ضرب المثلي) خاص خود داشت اين شعار (ضرب المثل) چه بود؟ در دوران رشد خود چه رهنمودهايي از طرف خانواده به شما داده ميشد؟

ديدگاههاي سياسي- اجتماعي

- در چه مقطع زماني با مسائل سياسي - اجتماعي درون ايران آشنا شديد و چه وقايع و يا اشخاصي در اين مسئله نقش داشتند؟

- ارزشها و باورهاي سياسي و ديدگاههاي اجتماعي شما در آن زمان چه چيزهايي را دربرميگرفتند؟

- ارزشها و باورهاي سياسي و ديدگاههايي اجتماعي شما در حال حاضر چگونهاند؟ چگونه ديدگاه كنوني تان از تجربيات زندان و شكنجه تاثير گرفتهاند؟

ضربه

- راجع به تجربيات زندان صحبت كنيد (بازداشت/ محاكمه/ شكنجه/ سالهاي زندان/ روابط چه مثبت وجه منفي/ آزادي / و نيز اطلاعات مهم ديگري كه ميخواهيد در ميان بگذاريد).

- راجع به تاثير شكنجه بر زندگيتان صحبت كنيد (رواني/بدني/ روابط كاري، دوستي، خانوادگي و اجتماعي).

حمايت

- در طول دوران زندان از چه حمايتي برخوردار بوديد (تصوري و يا رقمي)؟

- بعد از آزادي از زندان از چه حمايتي برخوردار شديد؟

- اكنون كه در تبعيد به سر ميبريد چه پشتيباني داريد؟

انعطاف پذيري/ برخورد موفقيتآميز

</div>

- به گذشته خود که نظر مي افكنيد فكر مي‌كنيد چه عواملي به شما كمك كرده اند که با وجود تجربيات زندان و شكنجه باز هم اميدوار باقي بمانيد؟

- بقاي خود در گرماگرم خشونت سياسي در ايران را چگونه معني مي‌كنيد؟

- با توجه به تجربياتتان با زندان و شكنجه فعاليتهاي كنوني شما که در رابطه با ايجاد تحول در وضع حقوق انسانها در ايران است برايتان چه معنايي دارند؟

- ديدتان نسبت به آينده چيست؟

زندگي در تبعيد

- راجع به زندگيتان در تبعيد بگوئيد (موقعيتها/ سختيها/ روابط ودوستيها/ كار/ تحصيل/ زبان/ خانواده/ تبعيض و غيره).

- آيا مطلب ديگري در رابطه با برخورد موفقيت آميز با تجربه شكنجه، دوباره روي پا ايستادن و مبارزه كنوني خود براي حقوق ديگران در حال حاضر به ذهنتان مي‌رسد که مايل باشيد با من در ميان بگذاريد؟

- آيا از من پرسشي داريد؟

Appendix E

Participant Informed Consent (Persian)

توافق برای شرکت آگاهانه در تحقیق

شرکت کننده احتمالی عزیز

از علاقه شما و اختصاص وقت گرانبهایتان برای شرکت در این پروژه تحقیقی بسیار سپاسگزارم. من دانشجوی سال سوم رشته روانشناسی در دانشگاه سیتون هل واقع در شرق امریکا میباشم که تحقیق کنونی پروژه تمام کار دکترای اینجانب است. هدف این پروژه بررسی تاثیرات شکنجه بر روی گروهی از زندانیان سیاسی ایرانی و واکاوی آن است که اینان خود چگونه تجربیات شکنجه، زنده ماندن در تلاطم خشونت سیاسی و فعالیتهای کنونی خویش برای حفظ حقوق دیگر انسانها را توضیح داده و تفسیر میکنند. امید است که نتایج این پژوهش به دانش کنونی در رابطه با تاثیرات ضربیات ناگوار و پروسه برخورد موفقیت آمیز با چنین ضرباتی بیافزاید.

از شما درخواست خواهد شد که در مصاحبه ای با محقق اصلی این پژوهش شرکت کنید. این مصاحبه ممکن است بین دو تا چهار ساعت از وقت شما را بگیرد. از شما راجع به سرگذشت زندگیتان از جمله تجربیاتتان در زندان و تبعید سوال خواهد شد. به خاطر الزامات تحقیقی، تمامی مصاحبه‌ها روی نوار صوتی ضبط شده و کلمه به کلمه بازنویسی خواهند شد. بازنویسی نوارها بوسیله محقق اصلی و تحلیل کردن متنها با کمک دو محقق دستیار دکتر گیوقدخت نیکفر وخانم مهدایران نمین انجام خواهند گرفت. از شما خواسته خواهد شد که در صورت تمایل آوا نویسی مصاحبه خود را مرور کرده ، در صورت لازم به متن آن اضافه کرده و یا راجع به آن با محقق اصلی سخنی بیش بگوئید. به منظور حفظ حقوق همه جانبه شرکت کنندگان در این پژوهش، تمامی اسامی و اطلاعات دیگرکه منجر به شناسائی افراد میشوند محفوظ نگاهداشته خواهد شد.

نتایج این تحقیق با صلاحدید محقق اصلی در کنفرانسها عرضه شده و همچنین به چاپ خواهند رسید. هدف از سوالهائی که از شما پرسیده خواهند شد این است که به دانش کنونی در رابطه با ضربیات ناگوار بر روی انسان و سیر درمانی و برگشت پذیری در مقابل چنین ضرباتی افزوده شود. همچنین امید است که نتایج این تحقیق به دیگر محققین رشته ضربات ناگواردر تلاششان برای کمک به بازماندگان ضربیات ناشی از خشونت سیاسی، شکنجه و دیگر خشونتهای سازمان یافته یاری‌دهد.

<u>اگر در اثر شرکت در هر مرحله از این پروژه تحقیقی دچار ناراحتی ناخواسته شدید میتوانید بدون هیچگونه تعهد از ادامه همکاری در این پروژه خودداری فرمائید</u>. اگر بعد از اتمام مصاحبه‌تان دچار ناآرامی، ناراحتی و یاالندوه شدید، لطفا بدون وقفه با محققین تماس گرفته و یا به متخصصین دیگر در رشته روان درمانی مراجعه فرمائید. در هر لحضه ضروری در طول و همچنین در پایان مصاحبه محقق اصلی لوقاتی را به صحبت در مورد احساس شما در رابطه با شرکت در این مصاحبه اختصاص خواهد داد. برای اطمینان حاصل کردن در مورد حفظ و ادامه سلامت همه جانبه شما, این محقق یک روز, یک هفته, دو هفته, و سه هفته پس از اتمام مصاحبه اتان با شما تماس بر قرار خواهد کرد. اگر هر گونه سوالی در رابطه با این پروژه داشته و یا مایل به دریافت کپی نتایج این پژوهش هستید با محقق اصلی یا مشاور دکترای او دکتر لرا پالمر تماس بگیرید. امکانهای تماس از این قرارند:

نورایمان قهاری
001-201-818-6771 تلفن   ghaharno@shu.edu
Laura Palmer, Ph.D.
001-973-275-2740 تلفن   palmerla@shu.edu

اگر سؤالی در مورد حقوق خود بعنوان شرکت کننده در این پروژه تحقیقی دارید میتوانید با دفتربررسی امور مربوط به پژوهش با انسانها در دانشگاه سیتون هل واقع در ایلت نیوجرسی در ایالات متحده امریکا (Seton Hall University, Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research) تماس برقرارکنید. این پروژه تحقیقی از سوی این دفتر بررسی و تائید گردیده است. دفتر مذکور تأیید میکند که این

پروژه به اندازه لازم و کافی حقوق خصوصی، اجتماعی، و فردی شرکت کنندگان را در نظر گرفته و رعایت میکند. با مدیر این دفتر میتوانید از طریق دفتر بورس و تحقیق تماس بگیرید

001-275-2974-973 Office of Grants and Research the Services.

شرکت شما در این پروژه تحقیقی کاملا بر اساس خواست داوطلبانه شما است. من صمیمانه امیدوارم که شما با وجود برنامه پر مشغله خود مرا در این پژوهش یاری خواهید داد. تصمم شما برای شرکت در این پژوهش دلالت بر این دارد که با آگاهی از حقوق خود به عنوان شرکت کننده و دیگر مطالب عنوان شده در این توافقنامه در این پژوهش شرکت کرده اید.

بخاطر توجه و همکاری شما و اختصاص وقتتان بسیار تشکر میکنم.

با احترام

نورایمان قهاری

Appendix F

Researcher's Background (Persian)

شرکت کننده عزیز،

اجازه دهید تا خودم را معرفی کنم. من زنی ایرانی هستم و اکنون کاندیدای دکترا در رشته روانشناسی . در ایران متولد شده و رشد یافته‌ام و در سال ۱۳۶۱ به امریکا رفته‌ام. پیش از سفر ناخواسته و ناگهانی خود در صحنه مبارزات سیاسی جنبش چپ ایران حاضر بوده و خشونت سیاسی را چون دیگران تجربه کرده‌ام. در ۱۹ سال گذشته در تبعید به سر برده و تاملاتیمات زندگی خود را به تعهدی اجتماعی برای حمایت از حقوق کسانی که صدایشان شنیده نمیشود، و تعهدی تخصصی برای دفاع، تعلیم و درمان قربانیان خشونت اجتماعی و سیاسی تبدیل کرده‌ام. بطور مشخصتر، در دورانی که در تبعید سپری کرده‌ام، خود را با مسائل مربوط به حقوق انسانها و پایمال شدن این حقوق بوسیله حربه هائی از جمله استفاده از شکنجه برای سرکوب و خاموش ساختن زندانیان سیاسی در ایران آشنا ساخته‌ام . در حالی که توجهات و علایق من در ابتدا جنبه ملی داشتند، به مرور زمان دید وسیعتری یافته و کم کم شامل زمینه‌ای جهانی گشتند. از آنجائی که در زمینه تحقیقی و درمانی در علم روانشناسی دوره دیده‌ام، امید دارم تا بتوانم دانش خود را در اختیار تدریس و تحقیق درباره قربانیان «جنایت علیه بشریت» و درمان قرار دهم. آغاز و به پایان رساندن این تحقیق قدم اساسی نخستینی است که در راه آگاه کردن عموم در مورد آنچه که "ناگفتنی " و آنچه که " ناشناخته " است بر میدارم.

در اینجا میخواهم که بار دیگر از توجه شما و اختصاص رقتتان به این پروژه مهم تحقیقی تشکر کرده و بگویم از اینکه تجارب زندگی خود را با من در میان میگذارید سپاسگزارم.

با سپاس قلبی

نور ایمان قهاری

Appendix G

List of Mental Health Services in Germany

Psycho-social-center for political refugees
Norbert Str. 27
50670 Köln
Tel.: 0221-160740

Christa Thiesies
Zülpicher Str. 184
50937 Köln
Tel: 0221-419994

Brigitte Brand
Zülpicher Str. 184
50937 Köln
Tel: 0221-4200923

Nargess Eskandarkhan
Stetten Str. 28
60322 Frankfurt
Tel: 069-95530495

Frankfurter Arbeitskreis Trauma Und Exil
Merianstr. 39 HH
D- 60326 Frankfurt/Main
Tel: +49-69-499174

Behandlungszentrum Fur Folteropfer
Klinikum Westend
Spandauer Damm 130
D- 14050 Berlin
Tel: 030-303-906-0