

Arts-based Methods with Vulnerable Children

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Theory,
Methods through Examples
Applications

What do we aim for when researching vulnerable children?

- Important for us to showcase the voices of vulnerable children and youth themselves who are underrepresented in research as subjects or agents
- The participatory case study phenomenological approach may also help overcome the challenges of researching high context, volatile culturally diverse and ad hoc settings in which vulnerable children live
- Children and youth have ideas, attitudes and interests about their own life circumstances, especially when living in contexts that erode the protection of western privileged childhood
- The rights of children to consult and express their worldview as well as influence their lives and the services provided for them are thus very relevant for disadvantaged children

How can arts based methods help reach this aim?

- To capture children's voices who come from multiple cultures Children who cannot read and write due to lack of schooling.
- Arts are a natural language for children that integrate emotions and perceptions within a developmental level, serving as a trigger for a richer narrative
- Drawings situate experience within culturally constructed values and ways of seeing, and are thus an ethnographic tool
- The arts help to describe specific 'real life' embodied situations rather than staying within verbal abstractions that can hide power relations and specific context resources, or lack thereof
- Arts can be a mediating language between adults and children
- The arts are a broad hermeneutic space enabling complex gestalts of experience and multiple interpretations of reality (marginalized children live within these complex spaces of intense stress and also coping- challenges and recourses)
- Art enables to tell a silenced story indirectly, on the level of trauma, and on the level of taboo, so that the teller has controll over amount of exposure, Finding images helps organize fragmented or silenced experience, and then to find the words for them
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A few words about what we mean by “ social art” what it’s not:

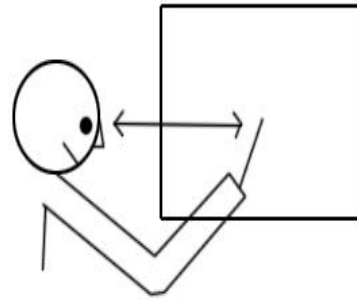
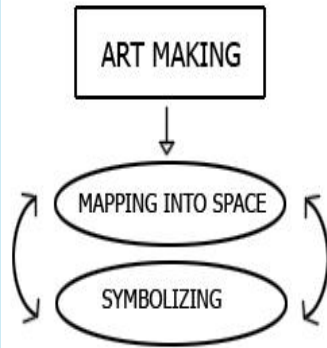
- **Not fine art**(separates from creator, adheres to aesthetic values trends and referencing of the fine art world)
- **Not psychoanalytical art** (assumes that art is an expression of the unconscious and that it can be ‘ analyzed’ through a set of internal values)
- **Yes, phenomenological and relational art- what does that mean?**
- The creator of the art is the interpreter and expert on his own image:
- Social art is a trigger to tell a story, to communicate firstly with self and then with others
- Social art is relational, that is, it only gains meaning in the context of the person explaining it and serves as a communicative tool. To explain oneself to others and better communicate with them
- , on the” the reactions to and meanings derived from the poem are more important than the poem itself

- Art as spatial and embodied, enables to shift away from verbal power infused abstractions, situating experience back into phenomenology but also contexts, spaces and recourses of the drawers as experts
- On all of these levels, arts can be empowering, and subversive to existing knowledge dynamics.
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ART MAKING AND EXPLAINING PROCESS

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SUBJECTIVE EXP:



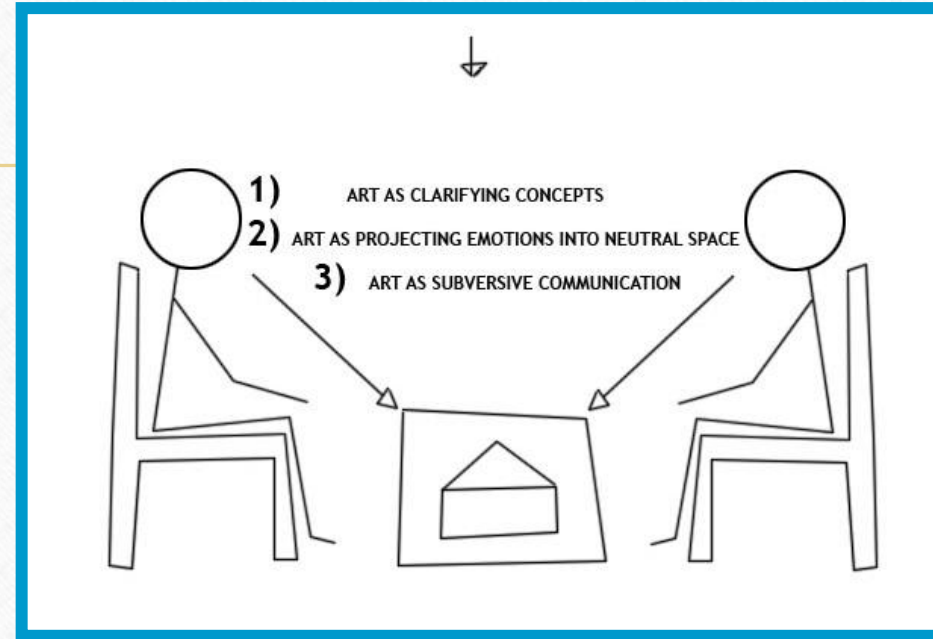
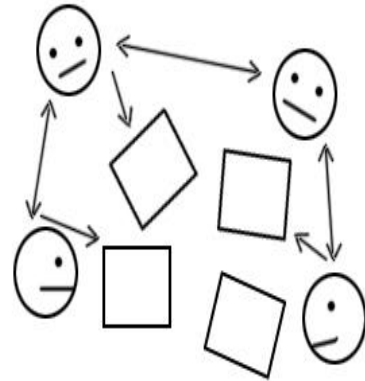
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CONSTRUCTED EXP:

ART EXPLAINING

ELABORATION ACCORDING TO SPECIFIC LOCALITY

RE-FRAMING OF EXPERIENCE ACCORDING TO GROUP



Example one, focus on arts based methods with vulnerable children studying in refugee camps

Creating places, relationships and education for refugee children in camps: Lessons learnt from the 'The School of Peace' educational model

Children & Society. 2020;00:1–22

METHODS

150 images and texts from all children, teachers, and volunteers. We used a school event of exhibitions to elicit more reactions and to bring data back to school, using art as trigger for discussion to hear all voices.

Prompt: "On one side of the page draw what you like about school and on the other what you don't like."

- The whole of the school received a piece of paper folded in half, and were asked to draw what they liked about the school and then what was challenging about it
- (= a directive helps focus the issue and deal with the "empty page")
- (= in power infused situations and in different cultures, it is hard to draw the negatives, by defining both sides, then it is legitimate to do both)
- Firstly, the pictures were hung on the wall and discussed as a group
- (= a shared reality group, this enables multiple perspectives from the same position)
- Secondly, they were shared with the whole school in the big hall in sets of exhibitions
- (= so that the teachers heard the children and vice versa)(can create directives that suit developmental level and culture and research questions)

Excavating a narrative



Analyses of the images

- The images of each group were analyzed in terms of
- The contents of the images (symbols, objects, situations)
- The explanations of the images (the verbal explanations written on the back)
- The cultural context of the image (Peer analyses with the teachers who were from the children's own refugee camp and multiple cultures (Singhalese, Syrian, Iranian) helped to create cultural understanding of the contents.

Three central categories emerged from the images and explanations of the images (grounded analyses)

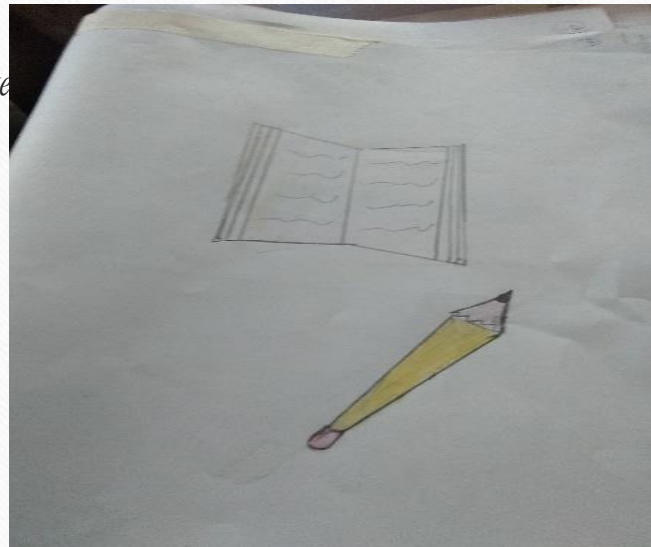
- 1) The physical elements of the school.(positive and negative)
- 2) The relational elements of the school.(positive and negative)
- 3) The curriculum elements of the school(positive and negative).

1: challenges of lack of physical resources

2: versus love of school as a physical resource

(remember, art is a “physical spatial medium to capture experience of body in space)

- *lack, of tasty food, books, heating, anger at physical discomfort were expressed. The physical poverty of the school.*
- *“Room no good, desk no good, no pencils or notebooks. the food is no good.”*
- *“I don't have teachers room”*



- *Our school is colorful, we look after it, it is not a grey asphalt building like other camp schools, the walls are painted, we made things out of wood we put our souls in the school building.”*

- *I love getting on the buss to go to school and leaving school*



is drawn as on colorful

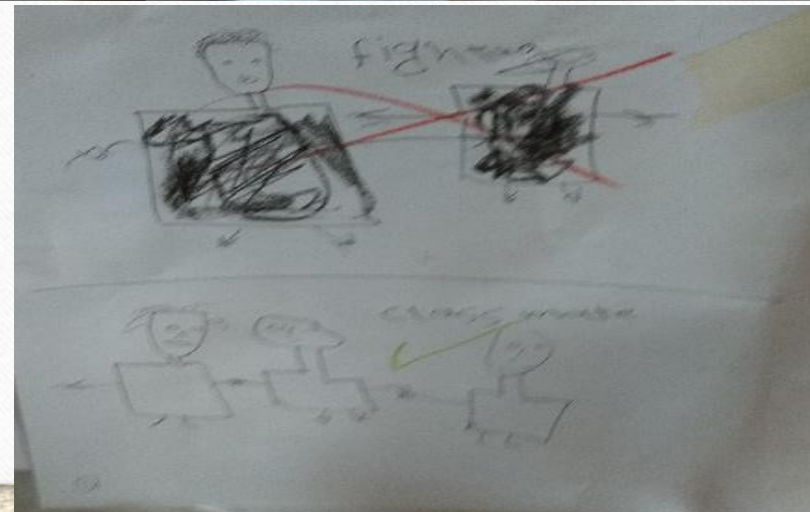
Physical element of the school (photovoice) we did it ourselves- with the students and parents



Constant fighting and conflicts between the ethnic groups, but...

- "The children are good and fun."
- "I wait to play games with my friends...we fight, but then we make up, the teachers help us make up, all the time, we make up."
- "I like playing football in the breaks."
- ". We are all in charge together, we have to reach solutions to problems by Sunday when the children return."

- The "I am always fighting with someone."
- "The boys fight with the girls."
- "The other groups fight with our group."
- "This is a constant struggle, to manage their *fighting*, on the bus, in the class, in the break."
- *We fight in the staff, we are from different cultures...*

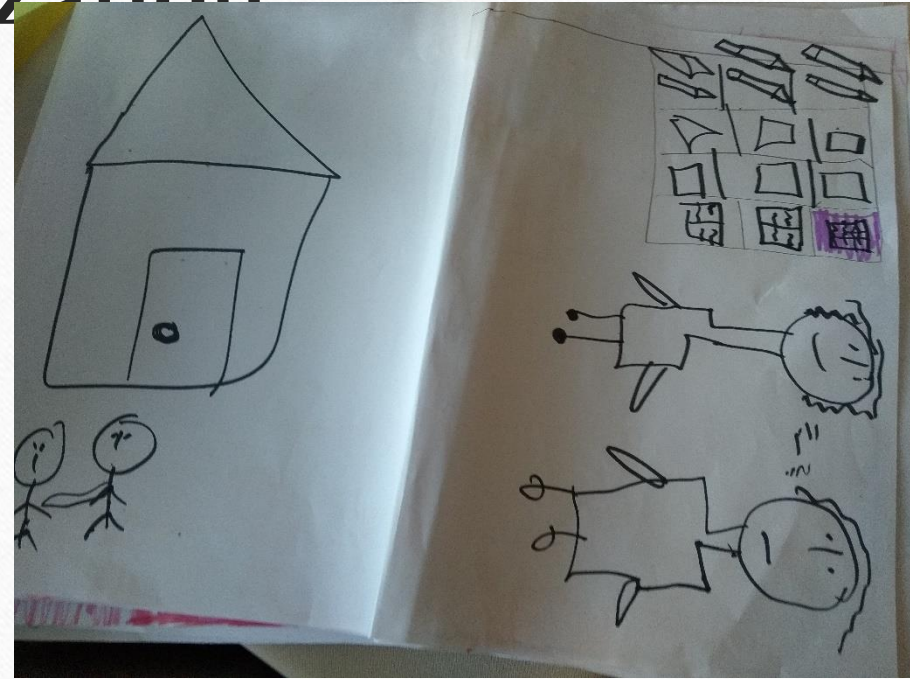


Formal studies- no materials or skills, huge gaps

-creating a structure hope, pride,
normalization

- **Negative;**I cant teach them they are such different levels
- I am not trained as a teacher, I have no books
- Just when some learn new ones enter and we start again

- **children** "I love to learn English,"
- I want to study it makes my parents happy
- I like to learn things in the classroom
- Formal studies are important, they give hope, a normal childhood- we made report cards, meetings with parents, clear rules about staying in class. We created together a structure even if we don't get far.



Summary: The three interactive pillars of the school: Maslow's triangle in action

- The first theme was the experience of lack, but also of attachment and pride in the physical elements of the school. (art showed this- the buss)
- The second theme was the intense conflicts, and constant efforts to negotiate conflicts in the school on all levels. Modeling relationships, based on problem solving through dialogue, rather than the violence characterizing the refugee camps. (art enabled to show what happened in day by day)
- The formal learning, even when not trained, strengthened the feeling of structure and safety and provided hope for the future as well as intellectual stimulation (teachers learned meaning of studies from children).
- = arts enabled to capture these three themes at all levels of the school, and to show how they interact, as a complex dynamic gestalt rather than as discrete themes or elements.



Research Examples: Children's self evaluation of the "Peace" community refugee school in Lesbos

Huss, E. (2018). Creative use of visual arts within conflict resolution. *The International Journal of Creativity and Problem Solving*, 26(1), 51-69.

= arts enabled to capture these three themes at all levels of the school, and to show how they interact , as a complex dynamic gestalt rather than as discrete themes or elements.

They also generate concrete suggestions for setting up such a school focusing on what is working:

Recommendations: The meaningful element for the children was, thus, not erasing conflicts, but repeated experiences in resolving them non- violently. *Focus on conflict negotiation in curriculum and activities.*

Poor physical conditions: Images of lack of physical comforts next to experiencing school as "a good home," a place they love and look after. : Focus on school as home, creative place-making, involvement in building and decorating the school and in cooking meals.

= these two elements give safety and structure to hold formal learning as a process



Moving on to participatory research model or community intervention:

- =The arts enabled all participants in the community to address the same issue- showing parallel processes and helping to understand others experience of the shared reality(ie food, meaning of learning)
- = the arts enabled effective communication, because the children could explain their image, rather than directly confront teachers, and could provide multiple explanations.
- = the arts enabled to return the data immediately and intensely to the participants in an exhibition (could be an online photo-voice exhibition, film)
- = the enabled to provide an indirect space to continue talking and thinking about the contents

Case study no2;
Adding a theoretical analytical prism to the arts analyses:
Capturing stress and coping as interactive elements
(shifting conception of marginalized children as passive
victims)
utilizing a specific theoretical prism to analyze the arts

Ephrat Huss, Orna Braun-Lewensohn, and Hassan

Using arts-based research to access sense of coherence in marginalised indigenous Bedouin youth

International Journal of Psychology, 2018 Vol. 53, No. S2, 64–71, DOI: 10.1002/ijop.12547

Background; The Indigenous Bedouin in Unrecognized villages

- Adolescence is a particularly important developmental stage since social, emotional, and cognitive processes are involved in attempts to navigate the increasingly complex relationships encountered during these years (Damon, 2004; Blakemore & Mills, 2014). SOC is an important contribution to young people's ability to manage or regulate their feelings, to control their emotions, and to avoid being overwhelmed by them (Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2001).
- Youth living in social marginalization and deep poverty and cultural marginalization are even more challenged to cross the developmental milestones of adolescence successfully, and thus, need to enhance salutogenic coping even more.
- The indigenous Bedouin youth in Israel, our targeted population in this study, are an example of marginalized impoverished youth that live in unrecognized villages in the Negev in tin huts with a lack of basic electricity, water, and health care and schools that are understaffed and far away from their villages without basic infrastructures. The community deals with tensions of rapid cultural transition and ongoing conflict over land ownership with the State of Israel that leads to regular demolition of illegal houses (Meir, 1997; Slater & Al-Krenawi, 2004; Porat, 2009).

Theoretical prism for data analyses = positive psychology (because we wanted to focus on coping)

- Antonovsky (1987) developed the concept of salutogenic coping and postulated that the most interesting area of research is to explore how people cope with stress, rather than to explore stress itself-assuming that stress is an ever-present element that people continuously strive to manage (i.e., utilise new actions to overcome their problems), understand (i.e., utilise new comprehensions to overcome their problems) and give new meanings to their problems
- (heart, head and feet)
- . These three elements together create a sense of coherence (SOC) that enables to manage stress situations as an ongoing element of life.

Rational for using Arts-based methods:

- In order to access culturally contextualized phenomenological knowledge of the youth concerning stress and coping, we turned to arts-based methods.
- Situating the narrative in the spatial gestalt of figure versus background enables the stress and coping to be situated within a specific social reality.
- Because Bedouin culture does not encourage verbal description of stress, it was decided upon to use an indirect method such as arts-based research that utilizes symbols and metaphors.
- The literature on multi-literacy learning points to the arts as providing a concrete and spatial interactive gestalt that can incorporate multiple elements of stress and coping in a single image, as compared to the more linear verbal analysis (Walton, 2012).
- Art is also a trigger for words, for more explanation, and for elaboration, useful with non verbal youth.
- The images can be used to bring out, and then verbalize articulate and thus enhance coping

Methods: “*A good day that went bad and what I did to make it better*”

- This gives us, an average day, a stressor, and ways of coping, so that we get stress and coping within a specific event
- (art as physical spatial, symbolic and metonymic)

- **Transforming an image to add how I coped can include;**
- making the problematic element smaller
- including someone who could help,
- shifting two people in conflict away from each other
- , modifying the intensity of the color-emotion
- , adding other elements,
- shifting the meanings and explanations of the elements
- or re-drawing the problem from a different perspective
- or just writing the solution next to the image
- or drawing another image of the solution.

- We provided oil pastels, which enable quick drawing of varied intensity and color and A-4 sized paper. Social work students trained in this method circulated in the classrooms and helped the 150 students.

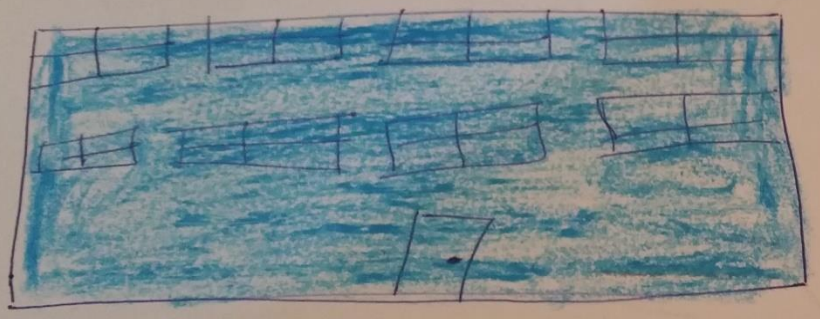
Data Analyses

- Three readings ;
- The first analysis was to maintain the focus on the self-explanations of the youth (phenomenological analysis).
- The second analysis used a cultural context perspective in that it aimed to situate this phenomenological experience within the social context of the Bedouin unrecognized villages.
- Our third analysis aimed to answer the research questions about how the youth self-define and manifest salutogenic coping

Theme 1: Stress Between Home-Study Demands.

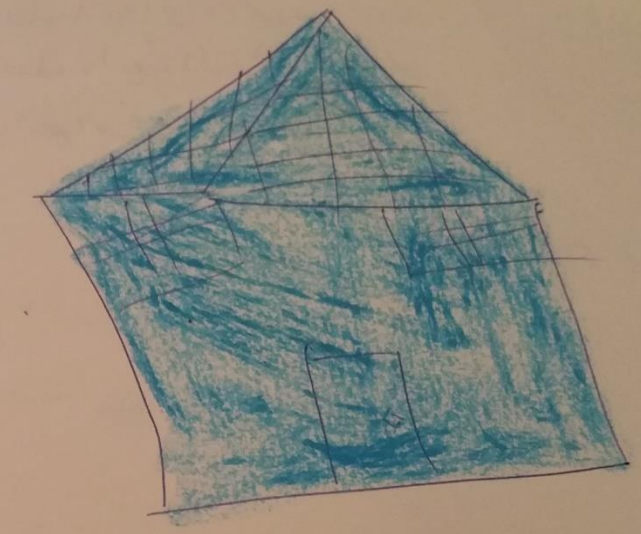
- The first stressor described by the youth was the tension between home and school responsibilities. On the one hand, they have to study and succeed as a way of escaping from the unrecognized village and of finding jobs, and there is a lot of pressure to succeed. On the other hand, they are still expected to fulfill traditional housekeeping roles that do not give them time to study. This follows the literature on the cultural transition.
- *“A good day is when I can study; it becomes bad when my father has many visitors in the men's tent, I have to prepare a lot of food, and I have to go and get water or clean the tent or look after animals. I can't study, and I don't know in advance when guests will come, and if it's an evening before an exam, I cannot study.”*
- *“A good day is when the internet works, and I can do homework; a bad day, most days, is when it doesn't.”*
- These school-related stressors were visually described using pictures of the school building, of school books, of exam situations, and of pages being split in two with one side depicting home and other side work.

مكان الذي احبته



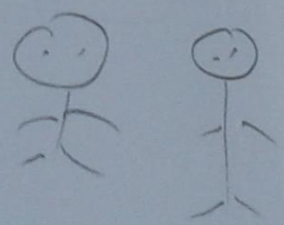
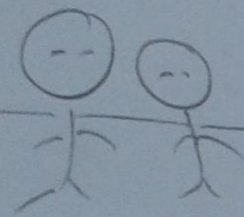
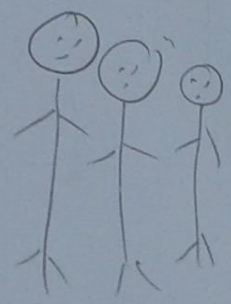
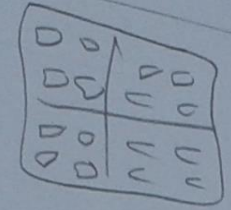
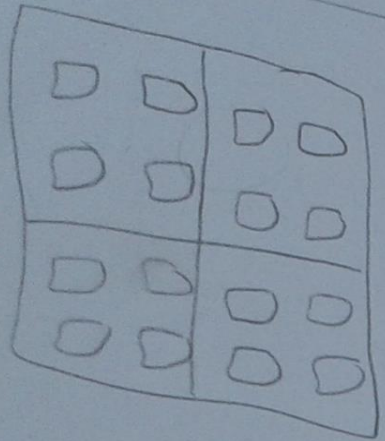
School

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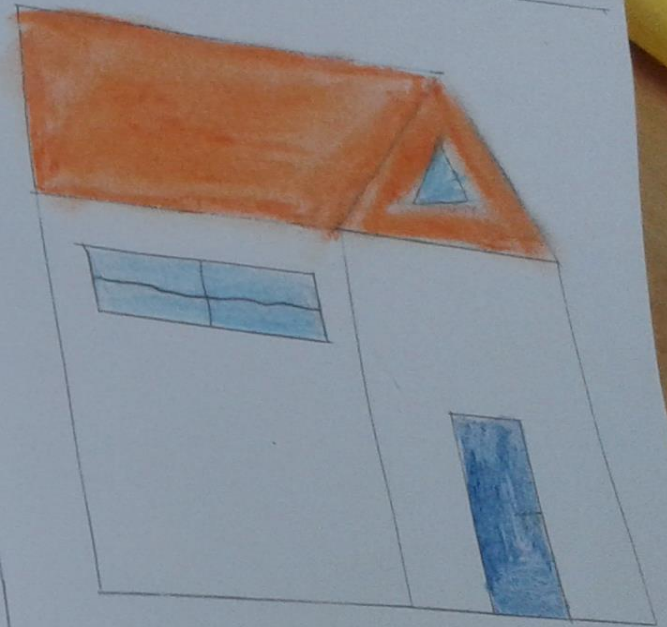
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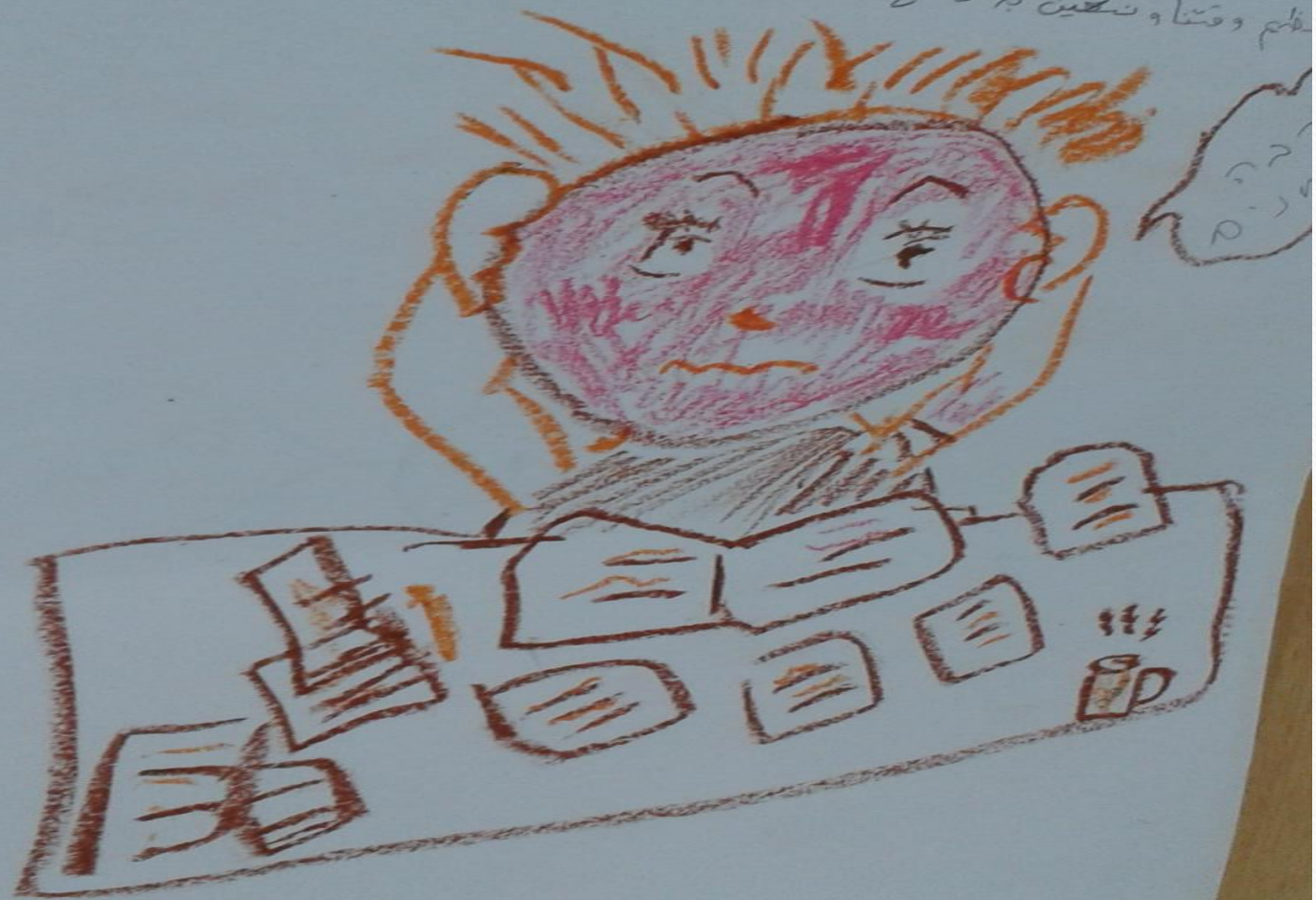


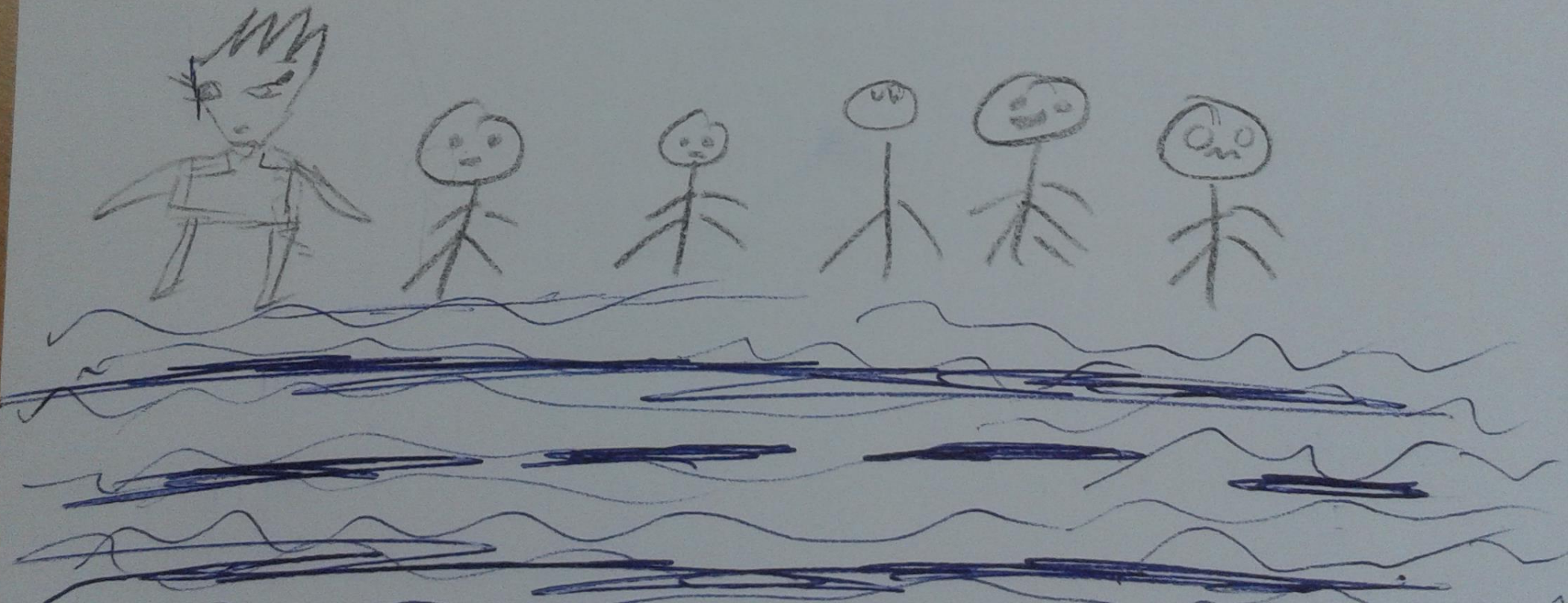
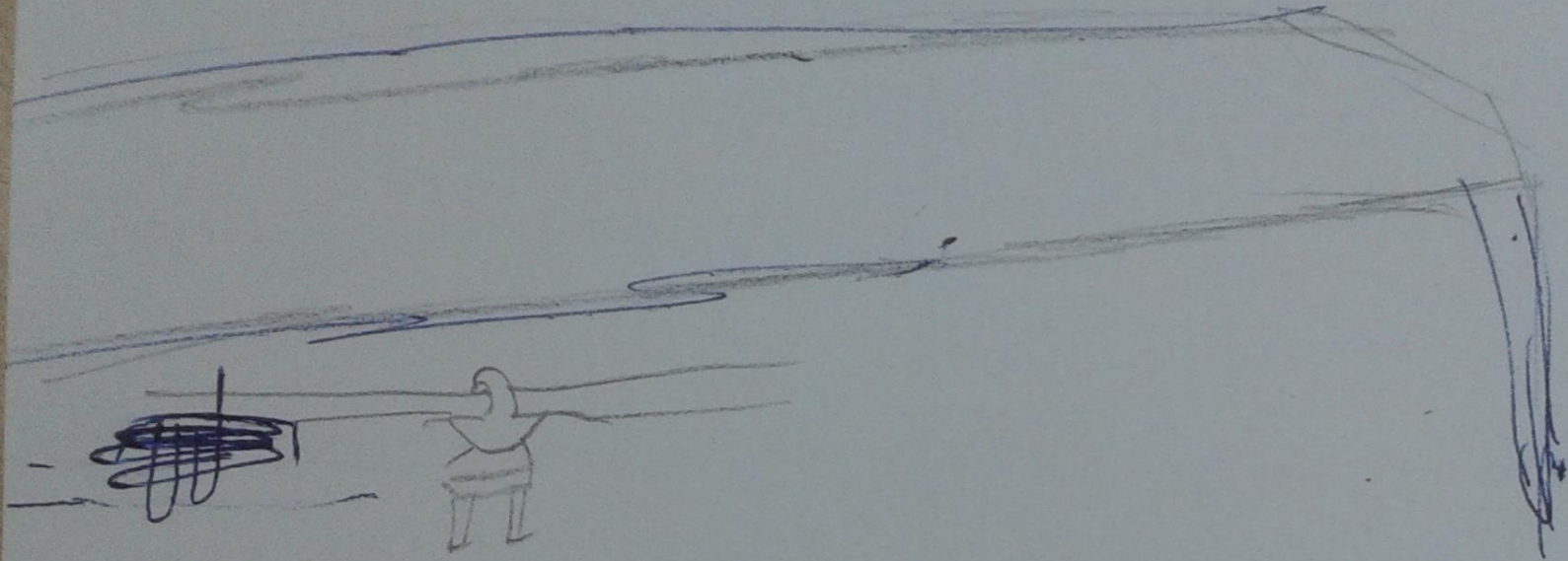
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المادة التي يجب حفظها وادائها . ولعبه في فرة . لذلك علينا
نظم وقتنا ونحسين به شأنا من اجل المواقف والنتائج .





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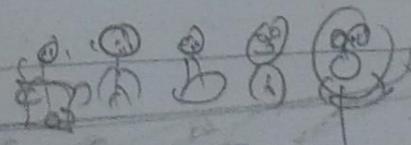
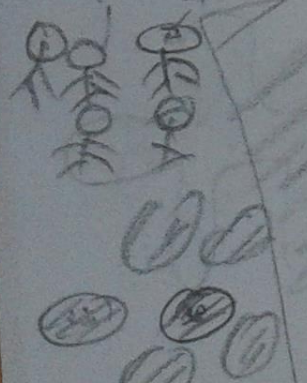
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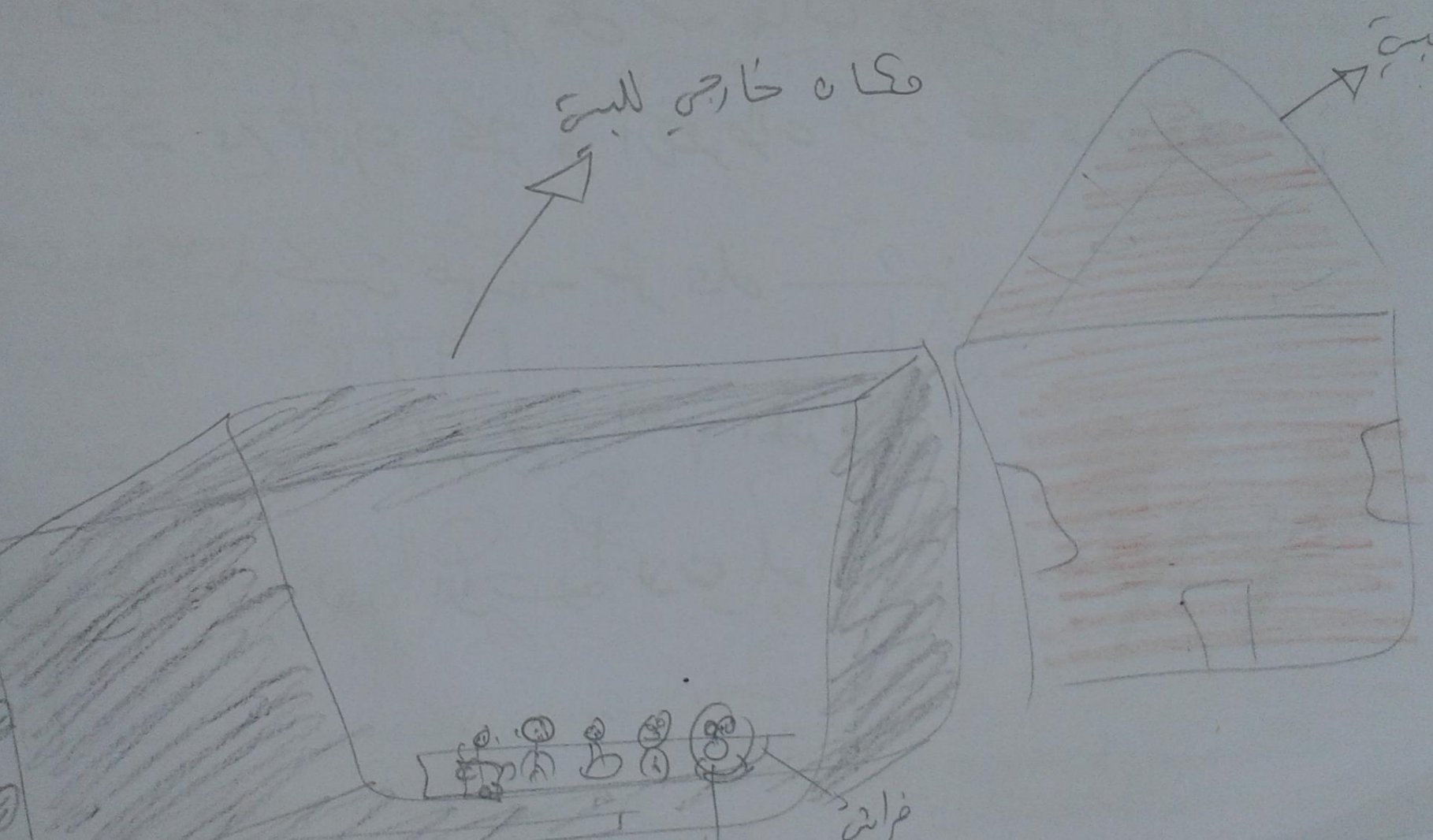
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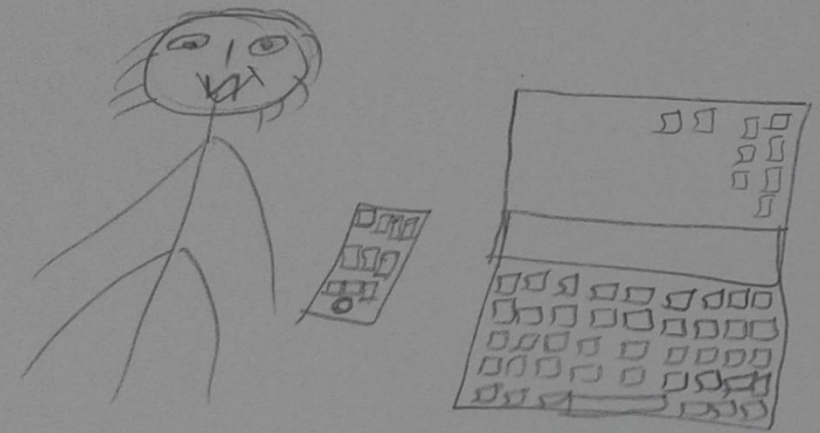
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فران



سی اسکی مع اعز صدیق او صدیقہ او انتظار رسائل او مکالمہ ہاتھیہ



What we and the youth learned about their coping through working with art

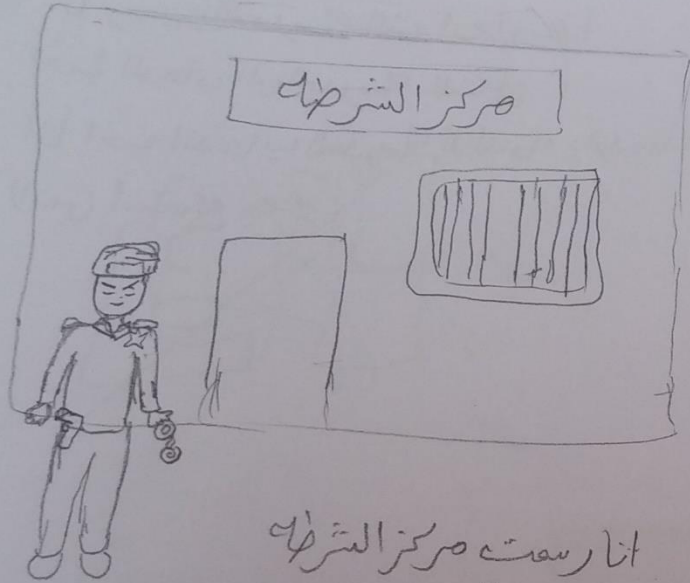
- These youth **managed** their stressors by:
 - using indirect methods of persuasion and confrontation,
 - negotiating dual levels of responsibility rather than choosing only one, and
 - internalizing and hiding negative feelings, so as not to overburden a fragile system and to maintain harmony.
- They tried to **understand** these stressors by:
 - understanding that education will help them transcend poverty, and
 - turning to traditional elders and family members for advice (rather than turning to representatives of the dominant culture).
- They created **meaning** out of these stressors by:
 - turning to religion, and
 - maintaining the traditional role of family as meaningful in addition to their studies.



Theme 2: Environmental Stressors

-
- The second stressor was to face the basic impoverishment of the physical environment and the hostility of national bodies, including destruction of homes built without a permit, antagonism of the police, and the lack of basic infrastructures such as safe roads, health facilities, and safe housing.
- *“A bad day is in the winter when a flood starts. There are no buses to school, and we are stuck at home. No one leaves. I miss exams and other important things because I have to wait until we can leave.”*
- *“A bad day is in a desert storm when the tin roof flew off the house, and we couldn’t do anything. Only in the morning could we fix it.”*
- *“A bad day is of course a death in the family. My brother-in-law died in a car accident.”*
- This theme was described with pictures of accidents, floods, and wild animals.

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انا رست مركز الشرطة
لا تبي لا احب ان اري الشرطة
ولا احب التواجد في السجن

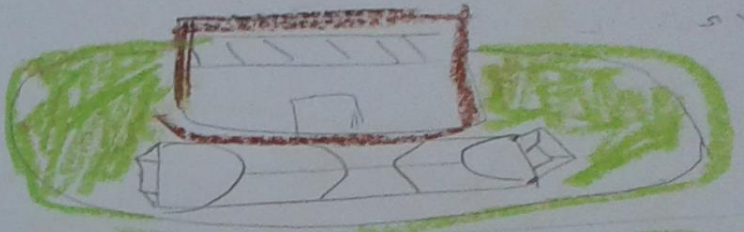
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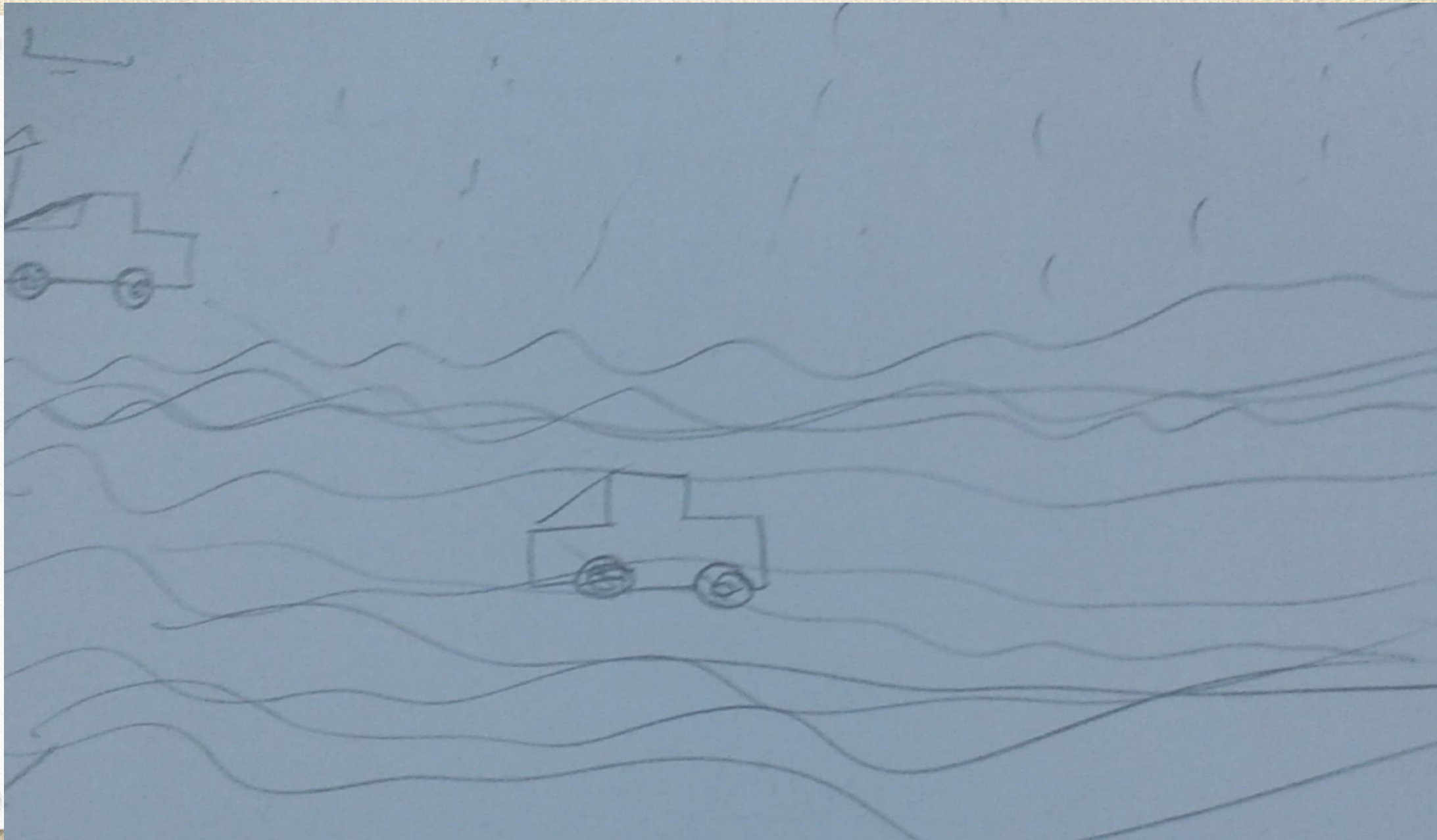
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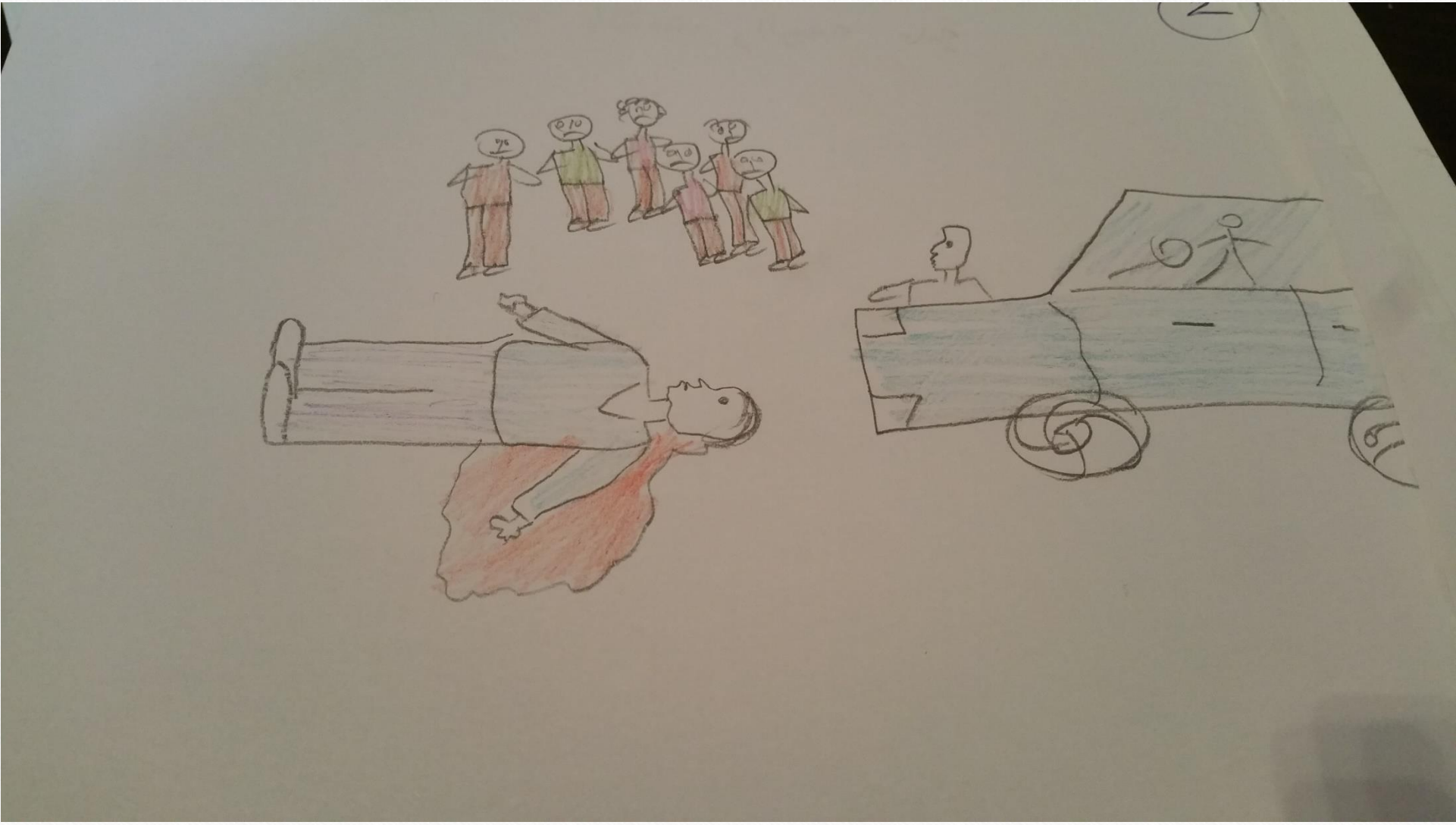


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Manageability

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- Manageability was defined as to stay with the family but not to burden them with stress. That is, the focus was on self-regulation because sources of external manageability such as police, hospitals, etc., were experienced as disengaged from and hostile to the population.
 - *“It was a good day. I was in school, and then it became bad. A relative was in an accident. I left school immediately to go home and be with my parents, but I chose not to talk to anyone. I took a few hours to be silent. I didn’t want to make it harder on my family.”*
 - *“I stood by my family. I didn’t know what to say when my uncle died, but I stood by everyone...”*

This does not look like manageability according to Western constructs, but within the social context, we can understand it as manageability.

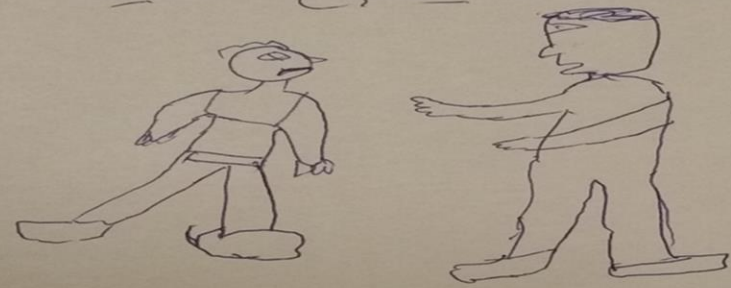
- Due to the impoverished and hostile environment, the participants experience their traditional minority families and culture as the only resource available in times of stress. However, this resource is itself so fragile that they cannot confront it or burden it with their stress. This is as compared to Western youth that have enough social resources to rebel against family or against school. Thus, manageability has a different “shape” or set of actions

Meaning and comprehension

- However, interestingly, solutions to the second environmental stress are derived from meaningful people, such as the elders and the sheik and prayer, and not from school, or the “Western” knowledge bases they are trying to acquire:
- *“I listen to older people in the tribe and see how they manage.”*
- *“I listened to our family; I stayed away from the police.”*
- *“I drew a mosque because this gives me strength.”*
- *“I understood that this was his fate to die in an accident.”*

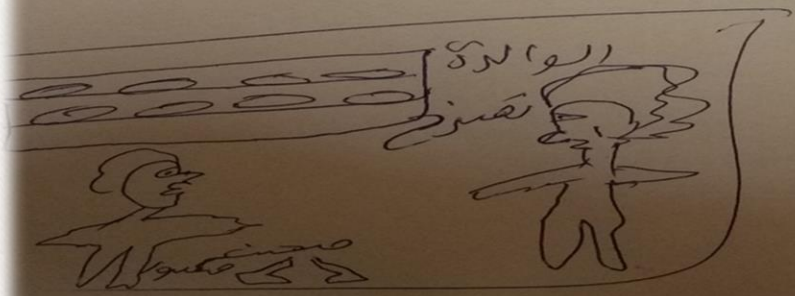
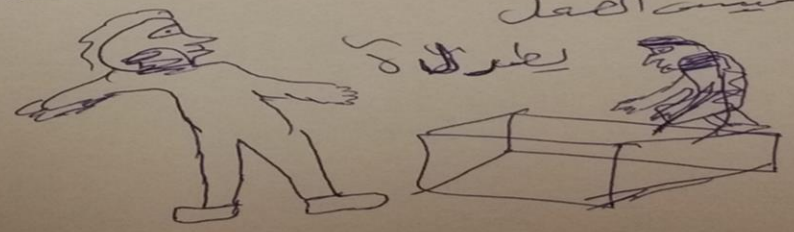
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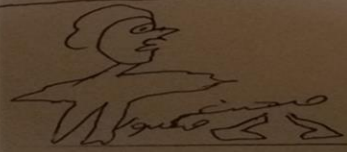
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Summary: What did the arts based data contribute?

- Both of these stressors are described in the literature above (Abu-Kuider, 1994; Abu Saad, 2004; Abu Bader, 2010; Gradus, 2010).
- The present data, however, showed how the youth experience them, but also, how they understand, make meaning out of, and generate ways of dealing with them.- in concrete situations, rather than just saying 'everything will be ok''
- The images demanded of the students to excavate and verbalize their coping, thus intensifying it, and also challenging western constructs of coping.
- We creates focus groups around these two themes to further activate and understand coping. This helps the youth and helps psychologists and teachers understand the coping within the context.



*Using arts as micro and macro intervention
simultaneously: "Free your mind"*

Tali Gil, Ephrat Huss, Vered Slonim Nevo



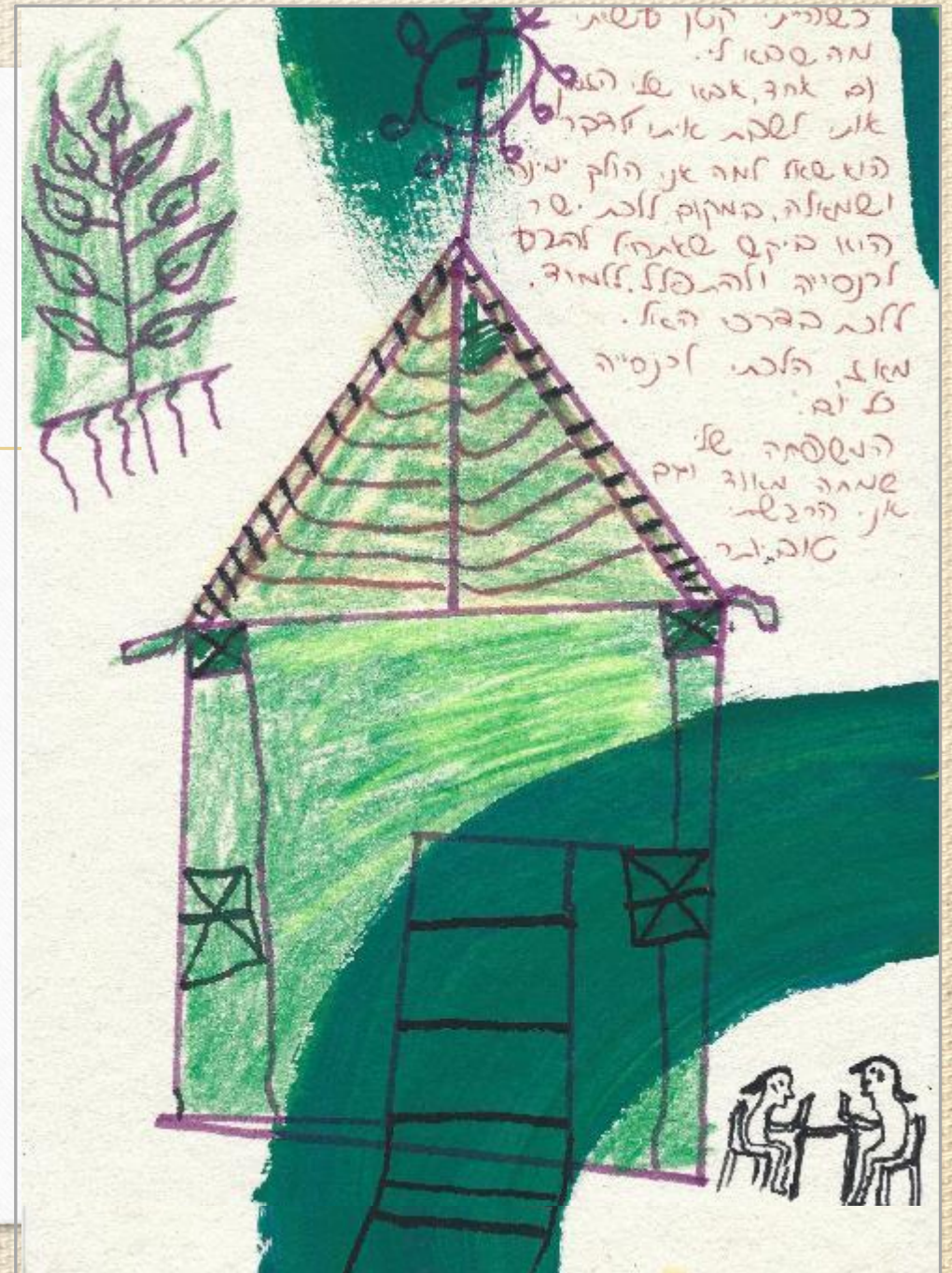
The good memories of the past pre-deportation



1. Missing the Past

Positive memories from before the war

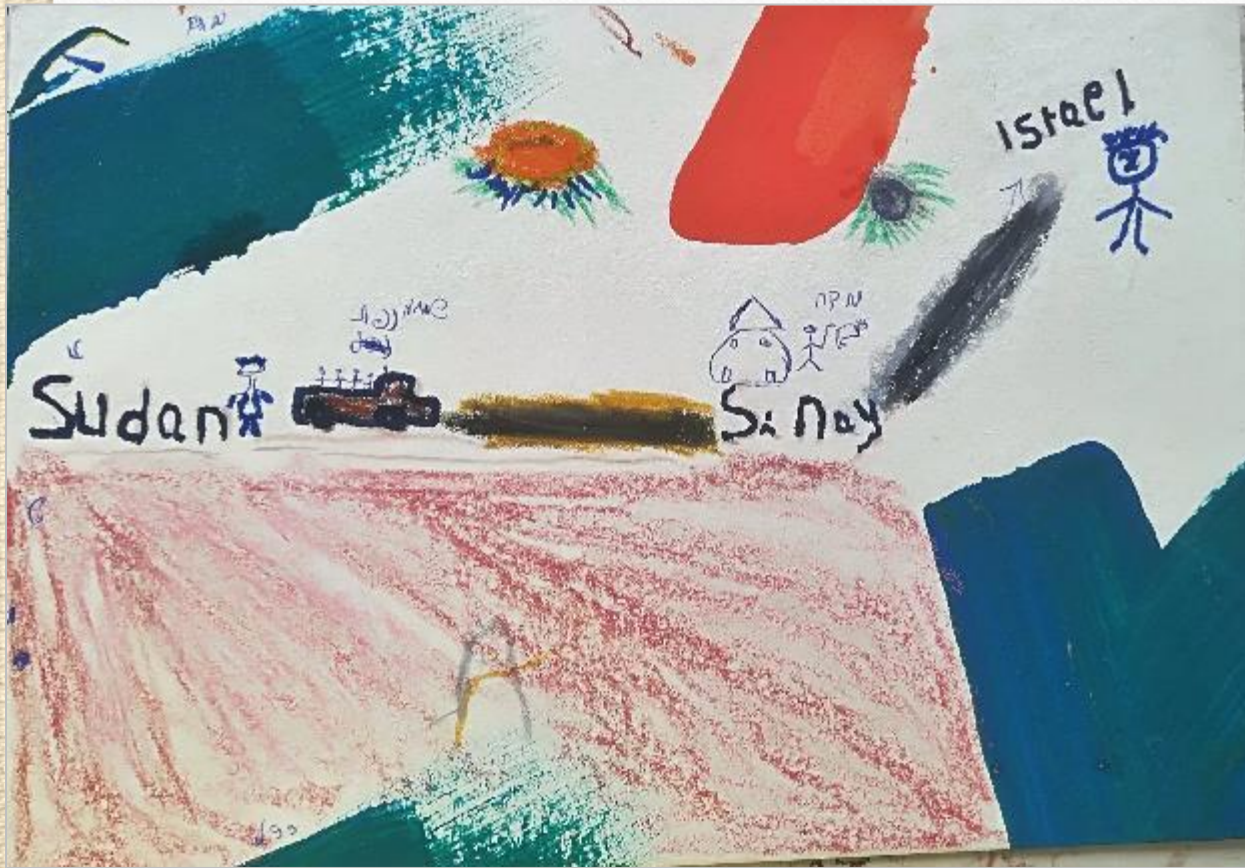
“When I was little I did what I wanted, one day my father asked me to come to church I went to church every day and that made me happy”.



2. The traumatic deportation



3. The Journey



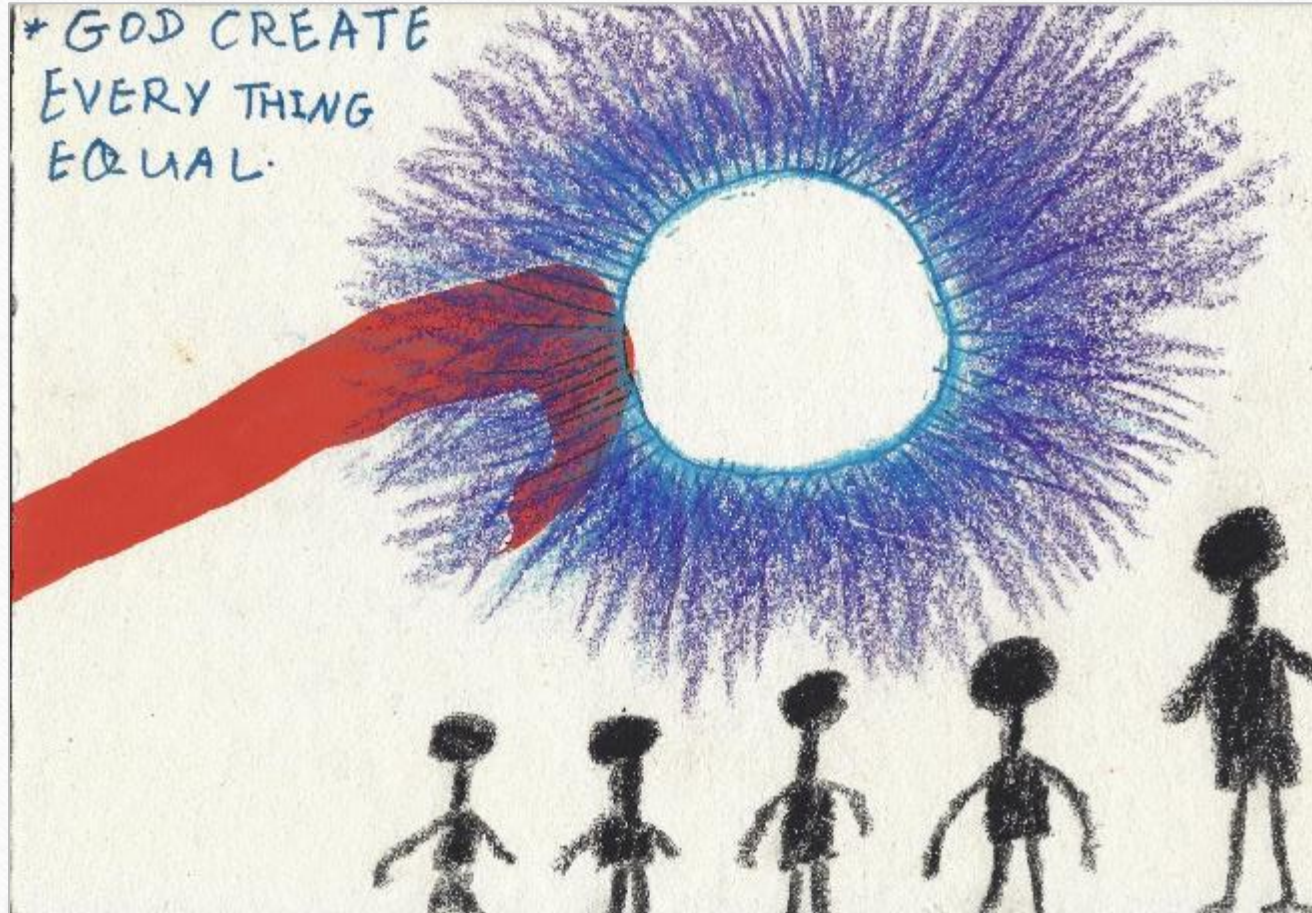
3. Call for empathy and justice

"The eye is my soul - and here I opened the gate of the prison. That's how I was in Eritrea and just like that in Sudan [...] and then I came here [to Israel], so even after all these years I am also in prison. That's why I paint like that".

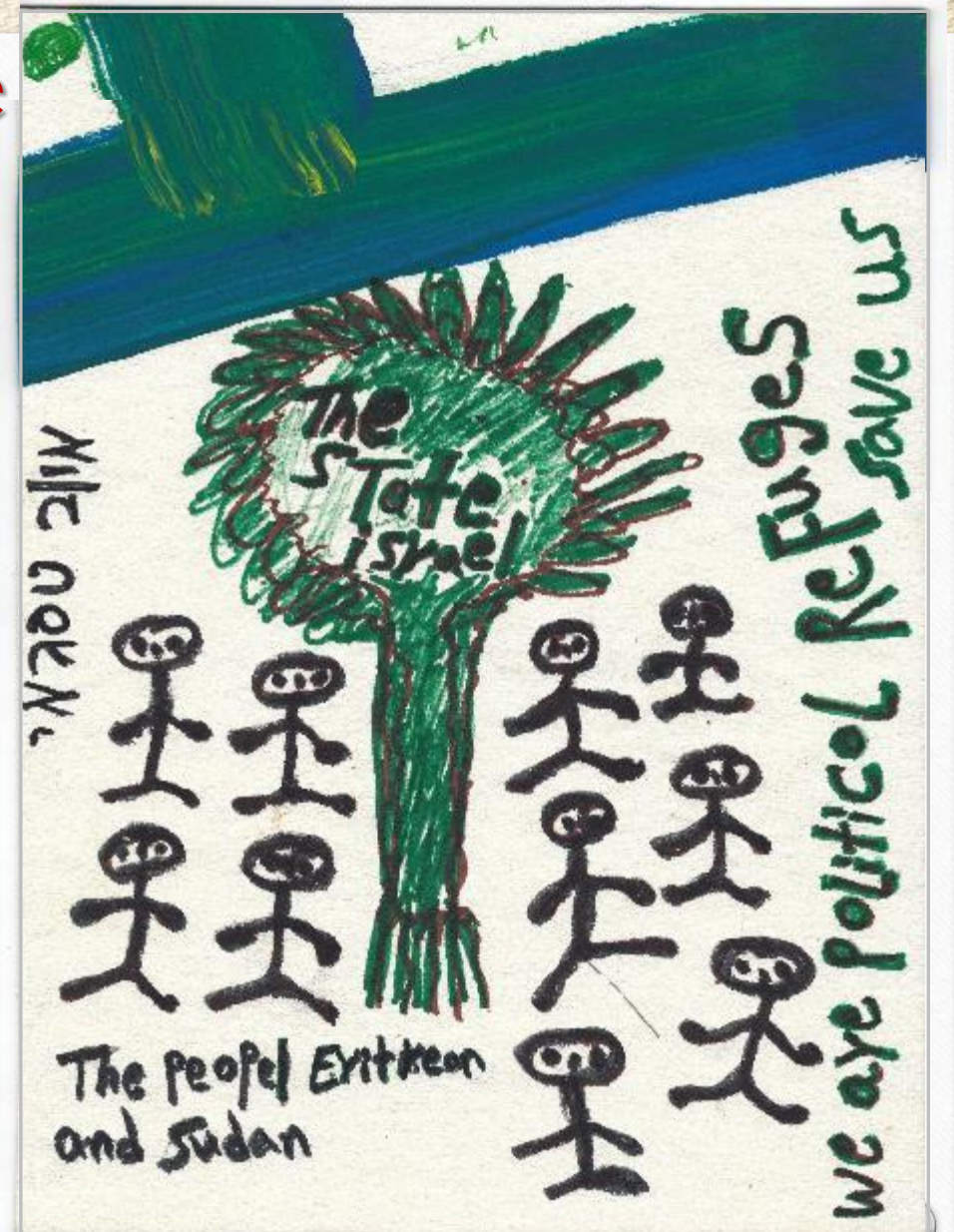
"Bad situation will change, but history remains".



4. Call for empathy and justice

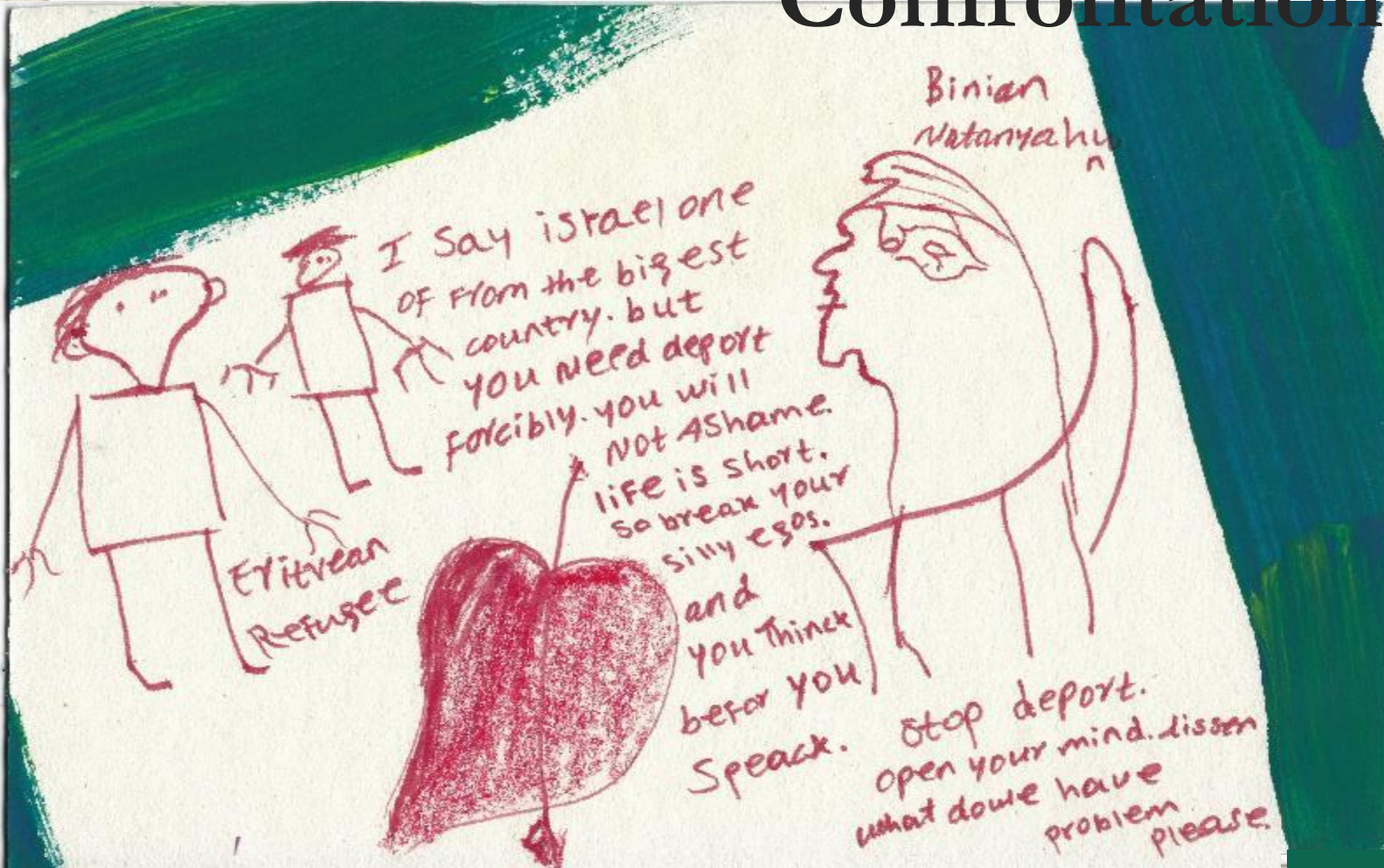


"God created everything equal"



"We are political refugees, save us"

Confrontation



"I say Israel one of the biggest country, but you need [?] deport forcibly..."

You will not ashame. Life is short so break your silly egos and you think before you speak, stop deport...

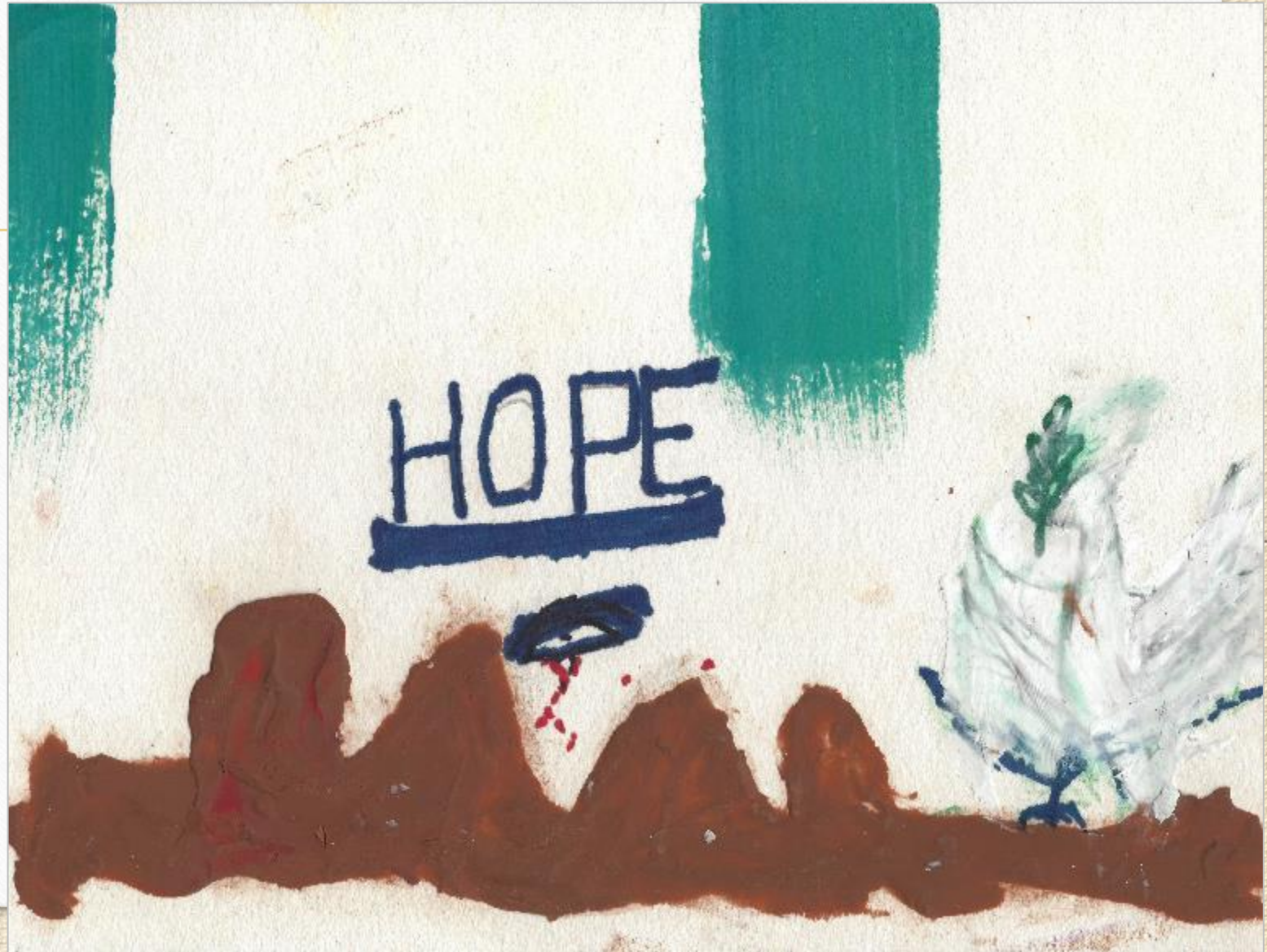
open your mind... don't have problem"

5. Themes of hope as coping

"You go up and down. if you don't have hope you don't have life.

Everyone knows how hard it was. I tried to get up, but I feel there was a hole in Sinai.

I thought that in Israel I will succeed, but here also it's very hard. Hope is very very hard to hold. I said in the end everything will be ok, I will have hope. I'm in prison now, But I still have hope".



“Free your mind” project with Eritrean refugees in university

- Themes The traumatic deportation
- The journey
- Plea for empathy
- Demand for justice – moral values
- = both healing journey and a way of creating sense of agency and voice to communicate with powerholders





Gathering around the joint art work that serves as a trigger for excavating experience and defining needs

What did the art enable?

- ✓ Art as a research methodology that co produces knowledge because it is
- ✓ A **platform for excavating, defining and effectively communicating** personal experiences and needs in shared reality groups – multiple elements of the shared experience
- ✓ **Art points to person- in context, and thus provides a socially contextualized voice and agency** rather than only pointing to trauma and pathology. This can inform policy makers about ways that people cope.
- ✓ **Art enables to address difficult experiences and to express confrontation in a “ safe”** way. This enables to enhance sense of coherence
- ✓ A space to experience agency, expertise,
- ✓ **Art is an effective end product, so as to influence power holders**

Malka, M^{PI}. **Huss, E^{PI}**. 2017. Using photo-voice with children of addicted parents. *Arts in Psychotherapy*



Theory,
Methods through Examples
Applications

What do we aim for when researching vulnerable children?

- Important for us to showcase the voices of vulnerable children and youth themselves who are underrepresented in research as subjects or agents
- The participatory case study phenomenological approach may also help overcome the challenges of researching high context, volatile culturally diverse and ad hoc settings in which vulnerable children live
- Children and youth have ideas, attitudes and interests about their own life circumstances, especially when living in contexts that erode the protection of western privileged childhood
- The rights of children to consult and express their worldview as well as influence their lives and the services provided for them are thus very relevant for disadvantaged children

How can arts based methods help reach this aim?

- To capture children's voices who come from multiple cultures Children who cannot read and write due to lack of schooling.
- Arts are a natural language for children that integrate emotions and perceptions within a developmental level, serving as a trigger for a richer narrative
- (because the mind is programmed to translate composition into content meaning and to connect this information to perceptual and emotional arousal helping to create a richer narrative based on symbols and metonyms
- (tension between content and composition)draw a shape and color of how you are right now.(for children, best moment of my day)
- Drawings situate experience within culturally constructed values and ways of seeing, and are thus an ethnographic tool
- The arts help to describe specific 'real life' embodied situations rather than staying within verbal abstractions that can hide power relations and specific resources, or lack thereof(with teenagers or youth). Art concretizes a narrative within time and place.(tension between figure and background).
- Arts can be a mediating language between adults and children enabling a space to create dialogue in a community between those without verbal power(children) and those with (adults)
- The arts are a broad hermeneutic space enabling multiple interpretations of reality (Winnicot)
- Art enables to tell a silenced story indirectly, on the level of trauma, and on the level of taboo, so that the teller has controll over amount of exposure, Finding images helps organize fragmented or silenced experience, and then to find the words for them
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