

## Am I This Hero? Representations of Hope with Children Who Were Removed From Their Homes to Emergency Shelters

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Recognizing representations of hope with maltreated children at a unique point in time upon being removed from their homes and placed in emergency shelters is the focal point of this research. Diagnosing and treating maltreated children at times of crises are complex goals due to the variety of emotions and the difficulties that arise with the child and their family upon arrival at an emergency shelter (Cohen, 2005). Therefore, the need arises to evaluate the child's strengths, the occurrences the child underwent and the degree of affect those occurrences may have before offering adequate solutions. A set of diagnostic and therapeutic tools is therefore required that meet the child at eye level, but also which will not deepen the child's loyalty conflict and allow access to their inner world. This research made use of the six part story method (Lahad, 1993) to allow for a non-recurring research intervention which did not confront the child directly with the components of the crises they are undergoing.

The research consisted of 17 children in the latency stage removed from their homes to emergency shelters, at a critical and significant point in time characterized by uncertainty for the future. With the variety of potential emotions recorded with such children, this research focuses on representations of hope that emerged in the projective stories created by the children. With maltreated children, a sense of hope is listed amongst the shielding factors capable of moderating or altering the child's response to the dangers arising from suffering maltreatment, strengthening their resilience and nourishing a positive adaptation, as well as minimizing chance of depression and behavioral problems (Carrick, Quas & Lion, 2010; Finzi-Dotan & Tiano, 2002; Mrazek & Mrazek, 1987; Shepherd, 2009; Stark & Boswell, 2001).

Analyzing the vast majority of the children's stories provides evident representations of hope. These appear in different forms that have to do with the heroes' abilities to help and be helped; be in close and beneficial relations; respond to and fight dangers and threats; succeed in achieving different goals and end the story in a positive and emotional tone. These representations of hope differ with different children and are naturally consistent with realistic positive experiences, as well as fantasies and wishes that have to do with compensation. Understanding these representations of hope is relevant to and serves people of different expertise who treat maltreated children, but it is also significant when taking initial steps towards structuring programs that make use of projective narrative tools whilst looking at the representations of hope as part of the diagnostic and therapeutic methods at emergency centers.

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