Neighborhood and Community Factors Related to Child Maltreatment: Research in Three Countries

An ecological approach recognizes the complexity of child maltreatment by considering transactions across individual, family, community, and sociocultural levels. Nevertheless, the vast majority of attention to child maltreatment has been aimed at the level of the parent and child. This panel considers a broader contextual view with a focus on the neighborhood and community.

The panel will present the first results from a three-country study (Cleveland, Ohio, USA; Bielefeld, Germany; and Tel Aviv, Israel) of neighborhoods and child maltreatment that builds on a twenty-year study of neighborhoods and child maltreatment in Cleveland, Ohio. The same interview was administered in all three countries, following the structure of the study in the early 1990s for comparison purposes. Topics to be presented will include neighborhood residents’ conceptualizations of child maltreatment and explanations for its occurrence, perceptions of neighborhood quality for children and families, intergenerational networks, social exclusion of single children, and adults’ actions to assist children. A comparison on these dimensions of neighborhood residents and social workers in the same neighborhoods in Cleveland also will be presented. In addition to the three-country study, the panel will include a discussion of the Strong Communities initiative. Results from a neighborhood survey of 198 parents will be presented. Survey questions addressed perceived collective efficacy, perceived parental efficacy, quality of life, and sense of hope. In addition, 35 practitioners within the neighborhood were interviewed about their perceptions of neighborhood collective efficacy, and more specifically, about support for families with children.

Key words: Neighborhood; Community; Child Maltreatment

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Neighborhoods and Child Maltreatment: Conceptual Issues and Findings from the Israeli and U.S. Sites of the Three-Country Study (Cleveland, Ohio, USA; Bielefeld, Germany; and Tel Aviv, Israel)

Spilsbury, James*; Nadan, Yochay*; Kaye-Tzadok, Avital*; Korbin, Jill*; Bhatta, Tirth; Coulton, Claudia; Crampton, David; and Richter, Francisca (* attending)

We will present the conceptual model and some initial results from a pilot study of neighborhoods and child maltreatment in Tel Aviv, Israel, and Cleveland, Ohio, USA. This work is part of a three-country study (Bielefeld, Germany is discussed in a separate presentation), and also a larger twenty-year mixed methods research program on neighborhoods and child maltreatment in Cleveland, Ohio. We will consider multiple pathways by which neighborhoods influence child maltreatment and how to study these pathways across neighborhoods in the same country and across neighborhoods in different nations. We also will briefly discuss issues in defining both neighborhood and child abuse and neglect, from the perspectives of official data and from the view of residents who live in these neighborhoods.

Initial findings from Tel Aviv and Cleveland will then be presented. Three neighborhoods with different socioeconomic profiles were selected in each city, and 20 residents (n=120) were randomly selected to participate in interviews based on our on-going research in Cleveland. Data to be presented will include neighborhood residents’ conceptualizations of what constitutes maltreatment, how residents explain the causes of maltreatment, and perceptions about neighborhood conditions for children and families that contribute to maltreatment.

Neighborhoods, parents and social distance. Concepts and results from the German part of the three – country study (Cleveland, Ohio, USA; Bielefeld, Germany; and Tel Aviv, Israel)
Sabine Andresen, Goethe-University Frankfurt

In this presentation I will start with the concept of neighborhoods in the German research context. During data collection process we realized in our part of the study that the neighborhood as a research unit includes some challenges. Statistical districts are characterized by a more or less diversity not by a clear segregation. What a neighborhood or their neighborhood mean to people is very different. I’d like to compare the concept of neighborhood with that of social space (Sozialraum) and I will give an overview about child maltreatment rates in Germany and how they are related to resources, social services and employment rates in communities.

In the second part of my paper I will talk about the results from the German part of the study and the ratings of parents and their perceptions of neighborhood quality for children and families,
intergenerational networks, social exclusion of single children, and adults’ actions to assist children and child maltreatment. This will be a more explorative work with the data we collected in two neighborhoods Bielefeld.

**Neighborhood and Community Factors Related to Child Maltreatment: Comparative Approaches**

*Strong Communities Initiative*

Strong Communities for Children is a unique primary prevention effort focused on changing attitudes and expectations regarding communities’ collective responsibilities for the safety of children. The Strong Communities initiative was first implemented in South Carolina in the United States and is currently being replicated in Tel Aviv, Israel. The presentation will describe how the initiative has been adapted to the Israeli context. Initial findings from a survey distributed to 198 parents in the service area will also be discussed. Topics covered by the survey included perceived community efficacy, perceived parental efficacy, quality of life, and sense of hope. In addition, 38 practitioners within the neighborhood were interviewed on their perception on the neighborhood collective efficacy overall, and more specifically about support for families with children. This presentation has relevance for individuals and organizations interested in child maltreatment prevention and conducting community-level research.

*Key words: Neighborhood; Community; Child Maltreatment*

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