THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND CONTEXT IN CHILD MALTREATMENT: PERSPECTIVES OF RISK AND PROTECTION IN DIVERSE SOCIETIES

Child Maltreatment in Context
The First Haruv International Conference
Psychology Is WEIRD

• Most research can make sense of, and originate from, WEIRD societies:

  Western
  Educated
  Industrialized
  Rich
  Democratic

• It is widely accepted that childrearing ideologies and practices reflect the interplay of cultural and ecological processes and that definitions of treatment and maltreatment vary drastically across cultures.

• What is regarded as a normative and culturally appropriate behavior in certain cultures may be regarded as risk provoking in others (e.g. corporal punishment).

(Korbin, 1981; Korbin & Spilsbury, 1999; Weisner, 2010)
NEVET Greenhouse

- NEVET is a multidisciplinary research and training greenhouse
- Our team of leading scholars comes from the disciplines of psychology, social work, education, law and medicine.
- We aim to develop context-informed research methods and knowledge, to inform both practice and policy and to promote understanding of families and children in multicultural and international contexts.
- National and international advisory board of experts.

- 8 faculty members
- 15 doctorate students
- 20 master students
- 2 post-doctorate students
A “Context informed” perspective regards human development and behavior and the theories humans form to explain their world, as influenced by the many contexts that surround them (e.g. socio-political, historical, economical, cultural, gender, etc.). It integrates the view of critical theories looking at the political context, power relations, culture as an evolving entity, complexity and hybridity.
International study on risk and protection

We will present today findings from an international study that aims to investigate similarities and differences in the ways professionals, parents and children from diverse populations define risk and protection.
Definitions of risk and protection

- Developmental risks refer to bio-ecological and/or psychosocial influences that can compromise children’s cognitive, socio-emotional, or physical-neural development (Wachs & Rahman, 2013).

- Resilience or protective influences refer to biological, individual, or contextual characteristics that can enhance children’s competence to reduce the likelihood of adverse consequences when exposed to risks (Masten & Powell, 2003; Wachs & Rahman, 2013).
## Risk and protection study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>PARENTS (mothers and fathers)</th>
<th>CHILDREN</th>
<th>PROFESSIONALS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ISRAEL</strong></td>
<td>Bedouins, Ethiopians, FSU immigrants, Native Israelis, Religious-Zionists, Ultra Orthodox, Palestinians</td>
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<td>Preschool teachers, social workers, educators, psychologists</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RUSSIA</strong></td>
<td>Native Russians, Jewish</td>
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<td><strong>GERMANY</strong></td>
<td>Native German, FSU immigrants</td>
<td>Native German, FSU immigrants</td>
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<td><strong>USA</strong></td>
<td>Afro-Americans, Ultra Orthodox Jews, FSU immigrants</td>
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<td><strong>ARGENTINA</strong></td>
<td>Ultra Orthodox Jews, Native Argentinians</td>
<td>Ultra Orthodox Jews, Native Argentinians</td>
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Presentations

• Gemara Netanel  
  NEVET-Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel  
  Ultraorthodox perspectives of child risk and protection

• Getenio-Kalush Michal  
  NEVET-Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel  
  Risk, prevention and intervention among Ethiopian mothers in Israel: A context informed perspective

• Ulitsa Natalie and Yona Lital  
  NEVET-Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel  
  Children at risk: Perceptions of immigrant parents from Former Soviet Union in Israel on risk, prevention and intervention

• Ibtisam Marey-Sarwan  
  NEVET- Hebrue University of Jerusalem, Israel  
  The definition of risk, prevention and intervention among Bedouin parents from unrecognized villages in the Naqab
Ultra-Orthodox Perspectives of Child Risk and Protection

Netanel Gemara
Supervisors: Prof. Dorit Strier & Dr. Yochay Nadan

October 14, 2015
Ultra-Orthodox
Research

• Research team

• Research Questions

• Sample

• Interview
Findings

Central themes:

• Relational definition of risk

• Attitudes towards physical punishment

• Attitudes towards formal social services

• Spiritual risk
Spiritual Risk

“Spiritually, the house is supposed to be a “greenhouse”, that makes sure that he [the child] is not deteriorating, that he doesn't get swept away by the street ... the street is a great danger to the spiritual realm. Also exposure to technology ... the advantage of our community is that we are closed. In my house we don't listen to the radio. But again, there are friends who can give the child ideas that he isn’t familiar with” (Rafael)
Spiritual Risk

“We view the world differently in many areas. For me a child who doesn't pray well, breaks my heart, and they [social workers] don't understand what the problem is. They don't understand that me seeing the child not praying, or the child quarreling with his sister are poles apart… What is a problem for us, is seen by them in a different light. It is very difficult to receive their help, or even more so, to let them talk to my child, and let him put ideas into his head.”

(Nissan)
Discussion

• Context-informed research
• Risk research
• Bridging the gap
Thank you!

Shalom!

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Risk, Prevention, and Intervention Among Ethiopian Mothers in Israel: A Context-Informed Perspective

Michal Gatenio-Kalush
Supervised by
Prof. Dorit Roer-Strier
Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel
* The Ethiopian community in Israel includes more than 135,000 people.
* Immigration started about 30 years ago.
* Traumatic journey to Israel resulting in an abrupt cultural change.
* Society in cultural transition: from traditional, rural society to Western urban one.
The Ethiopian Community
Life in Ethiopia
Before Alia to Israel

* Small villages, scattered over a wide area.
* A small minority among non-Jewish neighbors.

In 1976, Ethiopian Jews numbered about 28,000 people (Salmon, 1987).
* Livelihoods were based on agriculture, pottery, blacksmith, and weaving (Nudelman, 1986).
* No technology and ancient farming methods were used (Banai, 1988).
Cities in Israel with “Jewish Israeli from Ethiopian origin”

Kiriat-Malaachi
3000 Ethiopian
15%

Natania
10,000 Ethiopian
5%
Research Questions

1. How do Ethiopian mothers perceive risk for children?

2. What are their definitions of neglect, emotional & physical risk for children?
Methodology

Qualitative approach

* Socio-Demographic Questionnaire

* Semi-Structured Interviews
Sample & Procedures

30 infants and their Ethiopian mothers

Meeting with families twice during the study, when the babies were 3 months old, and again at 12 months of age.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Age of immigration</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Age of marriage</th>
<th>Education</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>21-43</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
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Findings- Main Themes

1. Emotional risk - The child should be in the center- risk is lack of love, nurturance and self esteem

2. Immigration as a risk factor- Immigration results in loss of respect from children and loss control over children

3. Risk from the society- while mothers teach to trust, racism and stereotypes are felt
1. Emotional Risk

Aliza:
“Not to hold back love, to try to teach her all sort of things like how to hug, to kiss. To tell her all kind of words for her development. She understands and knows a lot, eventually it will come out”. 
1. Emotional Risk

Mazal:
"I think that a child should express himself. I didn’t express myself as a child. I couldn’t and I didn’t had the opportunity. My parents didn’t listen to me. I think I listen closely to my children. Of course I’ll stand on my own if there are impossible things, but [I want] to give them a stage..."
2. Immigration as Risk Factor

Aviva:
“It’s hard to educate here, it’s not like in Ethiopia... there aren’t much temptations over there, the children are growing up with the same society, same education... so it turns out that over there you have less things to cope with, so here it’s harder.”

Zehavit:
“...The code of honor is the core of the education there. Here – its hutzpa (lack of respect).”
2. Immigration as Risk Factor

Mali:
"Today if you do anything, ‘halo police’. In past time, I know from stories, that if a child would steal something, he would be hit with a stick so he will learn for the future. Here if you do something, father thinks:" If I would even think about touching my son I know I’m going to be arrested or investigated at the police.”
2. Immigration as Risk Factor

Hila:
“There my mother really took care of us. Here she couldn’t gain control on the child. There if her child did something, as a punishment she would hit us. There a punishment was a punishment. Here she couldn’t do what she did there, so she lost control.”
3. Society as a risk factor

Ora:
"Young people told me- “we serve in the army and they treat us like this” ... The stigmas ... Ethiopians... [are] poor ... nothing to be expected ... I do not want it to happen to my children. Most of my children were born here and they feel [Israeli]more than we feel. It is so sad. And I am sure that my kids will feel what this youth feels. It does not depend on us.”
Discussion

- The Ethiopian mothers who were interviewed were educated in Israel and many of their children were born and raised here.
- They adopt some risk perceptions they attribute to the host culture such as emotional and educational neglect that they are trying to prevent.
- The mothers interviewed in this study showed strong desire for their children to integrate, succeed, have strong self esteem and pride in who they are.
Discussion

- Yet the core values of the Ethiopian community (e.g. respect) are still present. Societal lack of support (e.g. police intervention in cases of corporal punishment) is seen as risk for parental authority.
- Critical theory calls attention to power relations, racism and discrimination. Risk perceived from the broader society is very hard to overcome and is sometime seen as a given reality that the mothers can not change.
“Children at Risk”: Perceptions of Immigrant Parents from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) in Israel on Risk, Prevention and Intervention

Natalie Ulitsa & Lital Yona

Prof. Dorit Roer-Strier

The first Haruv International Conference 2015
Our study

Our research offers a context-informed perspective on parents’ perceptions and definitions of risk for child development, abuse and neglect among FSU immigrant families living in Israel.
A large ethnic group - more than 1,000,000 people

High level of education and large number of professionals (Harusi, 2000)
Immigrants from FSU in Israel: Background

- Low birth rate. Household size: 2-3 persons
- Strong community with political influence via FSU parties
- A strong affinity to preserving their original culture (language and customs). Ambivalence towards changing to the culture of receiving society (Al-Haj & Leshem, 2000)
Research questions

1. How do immigrant mothers and fathers perceive risk for children?

2. What are their definitions of neglect and the four different types of risk for children (physical, emotional, developmental, social risks)?

3. What are the appropriate ways to prevent, handle and care for children at risk according to immigrant parents?
Sample

25 mothers and 15 fathers (parents of children under the age of one) from a group of “1.5 generation” FSU immigrants living in Israel
Socio-demographic parameters of the sample

Mean Characteristics of the Sample

- Age of immigration:
  - Mothers (N=25): 13.4
  - Fathers (N=15): 13.4

- Education:
  - Mothers (N=25): 14.9
  - Fathers (N=15): 15.2

- Number of children:
  - Mothers (N=25): 1.6
  - Fathers (N=15): 2.08

- Age:
  - Mothers (N=25): 31.6
  - Fathers (N=15): 30.72
Method: Qualitative Approach

- Socio-demographic questionnaires
  (→ socio-cultural context)

- Semi-structured interviews with mothers and fathers
  (→ perceptions of risk, definitions of risk, ways of prevention and intervention)
Results

- Reflection of cultural preservation and change in perceptions of risk and definitions of risk
- Cultural differences in parental child-rearing ideologies and practices as risk factors
- Differences in the legislation of risk matters
Preservation

• Parents’ addictions as a risk factor for children:

Evgeniy, 33, two children:

“You can’t raise a child in such a sick environment. Parents want to get away from the demons they have in their minds and they turn to the bottle or drugs. The poor baby has to grow in to this nightmare... People should think before they bring a baby into the world. Alcoholic beverages, drugs and infants – are things that don’t and shouldn’t go together!”
• Diseases and health hazards as a **risk factor for children** and a **developmental risk:**

**Vadim, 32, one child:**

“...I think what’s dangerous and risky for children are diseases and improper and irresponsible parents’ approach for handling children, which could endanger them ... it can cause serious injuries for children...”
Preservation

• Core values of parenting reflect in developmental risk and definition of neglect:

Anastasya, 30, one child:

“...it’s very important to spend time with the child, give him attention... and the most important thing is to develop the child, that he will go to extra curricular activities, try this and that, and choose. I’ll try to give my daughter a lot of options and opportunities- not to neglect her!”
Drunken father - grief for the family!
Grow up healthy!
Learn excellently!
Importance of social connections and integration into Israeli society:

Eva, 28, one child:

“Children, that all the time are sitting with grandparents at home, or with a “Russian” nanny ... the child does not understand Hebrew. He comes to kindergarten and they all speak Hebrew! The child does not understand what he's told, so he has temper outbursts, screaming ... it comes out, that emotionally - he is at risk ...”
Ways of intervention: professional help (psychologists, social workers, educators, etc.) for children and parents

Alex, 35, three children:

“I think it should be professionals who know how to identify the problem and treat it, to remove the child from the problem he is in, to save him... Professionals know how to do it ... psychologists, social workers ...”
Cultural differences in parental child-rearing ideologies and practices as risk factors

Masha, 30, two children:

“The line is so thin ... opinions about education are so varied and different ... Someone can think that I am abusing my child when they see me giving a little slap on the bottom and I could find myself in the police explaining why...”
Differences in legislation of risk matters

Nadia, 31, three children:

“What was acceptable there is not acceptable here... Risk can be perceived in different ways according to the laws of the country. If here a child is a “child-at-risk “ when parents beat him, in another country the parents’ behavior can be supported by the government because it causes the children to be better citizens”
Discussion

- Emphasis on parental functioning and responsibility
  
  “There is no such thing as “children at risk”, there are families at risk!” (Dimitri)

- Differences in mothers’ and fathers’ perceptions of risk: mothers focused on the “micro” level and fathers had a wider view.

  Our research and findings call attention to the importance of understanding specific contexts and asking caregivers for their views on risk issues, which may differ from those of the professionals.
Thank you very much for your attention!

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Parenting and Risks Among Bedouins in Unrecognized Villages in the Naqab

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The Arab-Bedouins in the Naqab

- The Bedouin population is a unique social cultural group in the Arab society, which is in a stage of transition from a nomad way of life to permanent settlements.

- About 200,000 Bedouins are living in 10% of the territory that was controlled by them before 1948 (Meir, 2005; Yiftachel, 2003)
The unrecognized villages in the Naqab

- Out of all Bedouins that are living in the Naqab, about 80,000 are living in 36 unrecognized villages.

- These villages which the tribes refuse to leave as they consider them the tribe’s property, do not appear on official Israeli maps, or any governmental planning documents and therefore do not receive local education, medical and welfare services.
View of one of the unrecognized villages
(500-5000 residents live in each village)
Other characteristics of the population

- Interdependence between family members
  
  (Auerbach, Goldstein & Elbedour, 2000)

- Extended families

- Early marriages

- Polygamous marriage is very common
  
  (Al-Krenawi, 1999)
High birth rate (about 6.7 children)
(Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014)
High unemployment rate, low income and poverty
(Human Rights Watch, 2008)
Very young population (Almee, 2008)
Sample & Procedures

- One focus group with men and 4 with women from the unrecognized villages;
- Interviews with 33 mothers of infants in two points of time.
Definitions of risk

- Environmental risks
- Health related risks
- Cultural change
- Polygamous marriages
- Socio-political risks (e.g., house demolitions)
The 4 year study resulted in close contacts between the communities and the university.
From research to action

• Mothers established the “hope” kindergarten
• Mothers petitioned to Arab parliament members to present the case of risk for their children.
• Fathers supported mothers who wanted to get driving license.
• Mothers asked to learn how to write to support children.
• Mother asked for a course in small enterprises to increase family income.
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