

**Enacting Critical Social Work with Parents of
Children Defined as 'At-Risk': challenges and Suggestions for practice**

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Abstract

In the last two decades, there has been an increase in scholarly writing on the theory and practice of critical social work in the field of child welfare. Prominent in this literature is an outlook that recognizes the influence of imbalanced social power relations socioeconomic context and social injustices on the parenting of children defined as 'at-risk'. As yet, there is a dearth of knowledge regarding the specificities of the proposed practice in this statutory and compulsory arena.

This paper is based on critical reflection of my work as a social worker in a community center for families with children defined as 'at-risk'. Critical reflection is a process of unearthing implicit values, beliefs and assumptions in order to incorporate an understanding of personal experiences within social, cultural and structural contexts

Based on my critical reflection, the paper will offer a conceptualization of the challenges social workers face in their work with families of children defined as 'at-risk'. These challenges include: 1. the tension between the need to focus the intervention on parental capabilities versus the need to focus on the family's poverty; 2. The tension between the need to eliminate any risk in the life of the child versus the aspiration to understand the wider context of the family life; 3. The tension between the role of social workers as regulators versus their role as caregivers. I will then discuss practical principals of critical social work in child welfare that aim to cope with these challenges.

Key words: critical social work, child welfare, risk, critical reflection

Title of Lecture: "We Went Out ". How to treat families that do not benefit from treatment but their children are at high risk?

Name of speaker: **Ayala Oren** MSW Psychotherapist , supervisor , director of Maagalim

Abstract

The Maagalim program is part of the Child Development Unit of the Early Childhood Activity and Enrichment Center (Merkaz HaPaot), Tirat Carmel. Its goal is to treat young children in high risk families, whose parents did not benefit from treatment in the regular frameworks and whose treatment was considered a failure.

In such families, lack of treatment and their difficult life circumstances often lead to them reenacting experiences of their own parents and may result in removal of children from home. However while treatment is essential, the history of previous failures raises questions as to what is needed to succeed.

How can families with severe impairments in parenting , interpersonal relations and mental health , struggling with day to day survival , be engaged in emotional and developmental treatment?

How can such families , not easily accessible and experienced in multiple failed treatments be enticed into yet another treatment program?

How can the therapists discover methods that will enable these families to be involved in treatment?

Will they be able to benefit from treatment and grow to be better parents to their at risk children?

Is it possible to improve their complicated relationships with the community agencies and services by developing understanding and mentalization that will modify and broaden their perceptions ,attitudes and behavior?

In this lecture ,after describing our target population and their environments, I will address these complex questions and describe the various ways we developed to treat these families.

The Team: Moria Bosek, Livna Katz, Shelly Yuval, Noga Bar-ziv

**Overcoming Barriers: UNITAF model- Creating early childhood facilities
For non-status community in Israel**

Mariana Antoniuk,

UNITAF, Yehuda Tribitch Memorial Fund for Social Involvement

There are approximately 4,800 children ages 0-6 of migrant workers, and asylum seekers living in Israel whose non-resident status does not permit them to receive social and medical rights.

Non-status parents are not eligible for subsidized day care and cannot afford private settings. The solution for these children has been placement in neglectful settings (called “children’s warehouses” or “pirate nurseries”). The children in these settings are exposed to extreme conditions of risk and neglect, as well as emotional, physical, and motor functioning harm due to spending long hours in playpens and not receiving enough attention to their basic needs.

UNITAF holds unique model that was established by social workers, with the aim of empowering the community. At the model, former pirate caregivers are given training and supervision, and then moved, with their charges, into properly coded and furnished day care centers. The caregivers are women from West Africa and asylum seekers from Eritrea, who fled war, famine, and dictatorships, seeking a better future. They receive ongoing support and training from Unitaf’s pedagogical instructors and social workers.

The caregivers from the foreign community together with social workers and educators form a staff working under close educational supervision and providing children with holistic social care, focus in immediate trauma interventions, parental guiding for children at risk and creating accessibility to children rights and services in Israel. The environment is pleasant and learning-conducive. The trained nannies run the business independently, creating for themselves opportunities for economic independent and professional growth.

Key words: children at risk/ migrant/ refugee/ early childhood facilities

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Title: **Child social exclusion**

Key words: **social exclusion; resources; participation; quality of life.**

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Abstract:

Social exclusion has been defined as a lack of resources, an inability to participate and a low quality of life. The study presented attempts to operationalise the concept for children and comparatively using data derived from the Children's Worlds Survey of 12 year old children in 16 countries. Also, it attempts to evaluate (overall and by country) the risk of being materially deprived and also excluded in different sub-domains. It does all this by adapting the Bristol Social Exclusion Matrix (Levitas et al., 2007). Variables were selected to present 3 sub-domains, and combined using standardised scores.

The results for the 16 countries are compared for each sub-domain. Analysis of the overlaps between the sub-domains is undertaken using the pooled sample and for five selected countries.

Surprising and important results were found. The material and economic resources sub-domain explains more of the variation in the other elements of social exclusion but by no means all. Being excluded from social resources seems to be less associated with other types of exclusion in all countries. Experiences of social exclusion in childhood are linked more strongly in some countries than others and in some sub-domains than in others and these variations need further investigation.

The findings indicate that child poverty represented by material deprivation is not a good proxy for other aspects of child social exclusion. To conclude, there may be limits to the extent that social exclusion can be compared across such a diverse set of countries but a multi-dimensional approach provides a more complete picture than an exclusive focus on material deprivation.