**Katz, Carmit (PS3-A)**

**"My Brother’s Keeper?"**

**The Sibling Sub-system in the Context of Physical and Sexual Child Abuse**

Carmit Katz, Dafna Tener, Yochay Nadan and Dorit Roer-Strier

The sibling sub-system in a family is a core element requiring exploration in the context of family trauma, and more specifically in the context of child abuse (CA), and yet studies on this issue are scarce. The presented study aims to fill this gap by analyzing 30 forensic interviews held with siblings ages 4-14 following suspected physical or sexual abuse by a parent. Qualitative thematic analysis revealed that from the perspective of the abused children, the sibling sub-system at homes where sexual or physical abuse occurs comprises the most important coping resource for them. The siblings formed an alliance which enabled their physical and emotional survival within a reality in which their lives were in daily danger. The siblings emphasized that, within the family, they had only themselves to rely on, as the parental unit contained the perpetrator (mostly the father) and a mother whom the children perceived as a victim herself or as unable to protect them. Three main coping strategies were identified: older siblings protecting the physical wellbeing of younger siblings; older siblings protecting the emotional wellbeing of younger siblings; and siblings disclosing the abuse to sources outside the family, when it became impossible to protect each other.

The presented study represents the first stage in the development of a theoretical model of the sibling sub-system in the context of child abuse. Disseminating knowledge on the sibling sub-system will inform practice in the field of CA and will result in better adaptation of prevention and intervention efforts.

Keywords: Sibling sub-system; Families; Child Abuse

Responsible Author: Carmit Katz, Senior Lecturer; The Bob Shapell School of Social Work, Tel Aviv University, Israel. The Haruv Institute, Jerusalem.

Co-author: Dafna Tener, Lecturer; The Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel.

Co-author: Yochay Nadan, Senior Lecturer; The Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel.

Co-author: Dorit Roer-Strier, Professor, The Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel.