Sponsoring Committee: Professor Sandee McClowry, Chairperson
Professor Carola Suarez-Orozco
Professor David Pelcovitz

An Abstract of

INSIGHTS INTO CHILDREN'S TEMPERAMENT:
A CULTURAL MODIFICATION FOR THE
HAREDI JEWISH COMMUNITY

Robyn Koslowitz

Program in School Psychology
Department of Applied Psychology

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ABSTRACT

This applied ethnographic study had two aims. The first was to explore the core cultural assumptions underlying parenting in the Haredi Jewish. The second was to utilize the core cultural assumptions to investigate the cultural consonance of a prevention intervention, INSIGHTS into Children’s Temperament. Based on interviews with parenting professionals, focus groups of mothers, and textual analysis, core cultural assumptions data were analyzed using the constant comparative method from grounded theory.

Findings indicate that core cultural assumptions underlying Haredi parenting include a religious orientation and law that direct parenting decisions; a combination of past and future time orientations, with an emphasis on cultural transmission; an activity orientation focused on education or “being in becoming”; a relational orientation that includes cultural tightness and strong communal participation; and a view of human nature that is good and evil, but mutable. In addition, parenting roles are strongly gendered.

An area of grave concern to parents and the community is the prevalence of Kids at Risk Syndrome that describes Haredi teenagers who “drop out” of the culture. Parenting professionals and parents in the focus groups all emphasized the need for prevention interventions to reverse this trend.
INSIGHTS is a universal and indicated prevention intervention that has been demonstrated efficacy with urban African Americans children and their parents. INSIGHTS is currently undergoing cultural modification for Spanish-speaking parents. Focus groups of Haredi mothers who underwent the standard version of INSIGHTS reported that core assumption underlying the intervention are culturally consonant with Haredi values. Surface level modifications, such as matching exemplars to communal norms are, however, needed. In addition, several concepts of INSIGHTS should be culturally modified to more closely resonate with Haredi values. Focus group participants provided recommendations for cultural modification.