

Insights into the Integration and Wellbeing of Syrian Newcomer Youth from Research with Mothers

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Outline (15 min)

- What can research with mothers reveal about children? (1 min, Neda)
- Pilot Project: Syrian Refugee Mothers' Mental Health (2 min, Neda)
 - Research Questions
- Preliminary Results and Next Steps (5 min, Neda)
- Methodological Design and Notes (7 min, Laila)

Pilot Study: November 2016 – May 2017

Refugee Mothers' Mental Health

- Designed a study to focus on main tasks of refugee mothers
- Children loomed large in the research background/interview guide
 - Mothers' work to "settle" children into new homes, schools & neighbourhoods
 - Children's well-being dependent on quick success in schooling, with teachers & peers
 - Children's well-being dependent on strong mothers
- Children's problems were a source of stress for mothers, but not always how we had anticipated

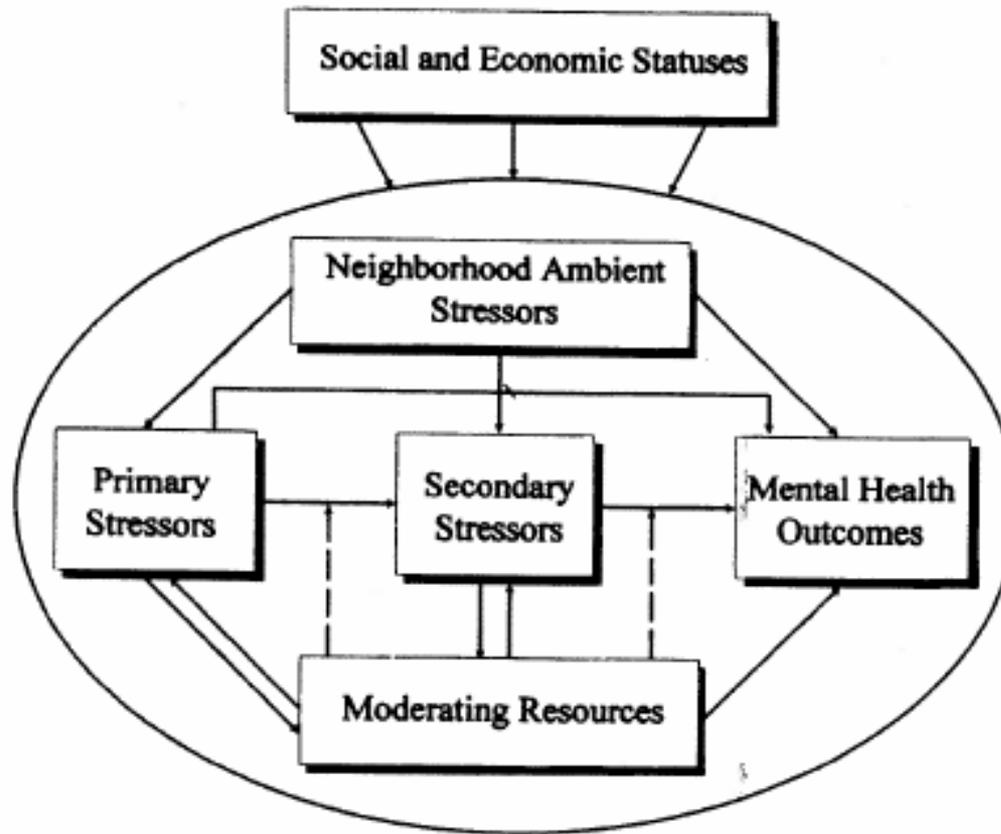


FIGURE 19.1. The stress process model.

Pearlin, Leonard. 1999. "The Stress Process Revisited." *Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*: p. 398

Refugee Mothers' Mental Health: RQs

- RQ1: What specific stressors arise in the unique role of settling children?
 - How do stressors link to mothers' mental health?
- RQ2: What supports work to buffer the relationship between stressors & distress?

Preliminary Findings

- ◇ Interview process and mental health scales (2 waves, ~ 4 months apart; 43 participants) showed
 - ◇ Deep pain of loss of home & networks
 - ◇ Majority of respondents wept during interviews
- ◇ 3 forms of mothering stressors
 - ◇ 1 indirectly involves children, and
 - ◇ 2 directly involve children

Initial Results: Mothering Stressors I

- ◇ I. Crystalization of losses upon settling
 - ◇ of home, network & extended kin for mothering
 - ◇ central forms of mothering are shaken up
 - ◇ ...but move tied to success in protector role as children are now safe

Initial Results: Mothering Stressors II

- ◇ II. Children's problems: Schools & communities
 - ◇ Initial child difficulties with language, schooling & peers described
 - ◇ but often solved through teachers, translators & sponsors
 - ◇ Settling children into schools & neighbourhoods compares favourably to recent past in Jordan, Lebanon, etc.
 - ◇ Education quality viewed as good or better
 - ◇ Mothers feel Syrian children matter and are valued by teachers & community in Canada; often was NOT the case in prior locales

Initial Results: Mothering Stressors III

- ◆ III. Children's– especially teens'-- futures & unknowns
 - ◆ Though children are physically safe, how might children fall prey to undesirable culture & values in the future?
 - ◆ View of Canadian parents – patient & caring, but different values
 - ◆ Uncertainty of ability to safeguard future transmission of cultural & moral values

Stressors III: Teenagers' uncertain futures

- ◆ I: Concerning [your childrens'] future, are you concerned about anything? In their future?
- ◆ P29: I am concerned about their future, like my [edlest] daughter, she wishes for architecture or engineering but her circumstances are not improving.
- ◆ I: What are other things that you are scared of or concerned about?
- ◆ P29: I am concerned that they will walk in the wrong path, this thing... that the atmosphere has changed for them... they are seeing different types, different people, just because of that I am concerned. Like, they go to a place, but they come from a place, like this.

Stressors III: Teenagers' uncertain futures

- ◇ Participant 4: What can I say? For their future, people's talk here scares me.
- ◇ I: How so?
- ◇ P4: Well, they say that if they are 18, you have no legal obligations towards them; they go one way and you another. It plants an idea in their heads. The future scares me. That's it.

Next Potential Steps



Methodological Design: Interview Process – Context

DBNC (Mississauga)

- Sampling through DBNC
- Location: language center
- Time: fixed, not flexible
- Meeting participants for the first time (no personal relationship to interviewer)

Toronto

- Snowball sampling / drawing on personal connections
- Location: dispersed
- Time: variable
- Challenges in meeting with participants

Lessons Learned

Rapport is Key

- Language
- Cultural similarities
- Canadian experience
- Warzone experiences

Impact on Interviewer

- Emotional involvement
- Expectations
- Balance

Transcribing Process

- ◇ **Positives & negatives of having the same interviewer/transcriber**
 - ◇ Transcription can include thicker description of the setting
 - ◇ Risk of retro-actively weighting certain terms on the basis of the interviewer's experience

- ◇ **Positives & negatives of having an individual transcriber**
 - ◇ More “objective”: does not interfere in or modify the recorded interview
 - ◇ Can only transcribe what is said, but not fully describe the setting
 - ◇ Needs to be able to recognize the cultural cues and linguistic particulars of the interview

Benefits of having cultural/ local knowledge

- ◇ Benefits of having local knowledge
 - ◇ “*Ajaneb*”
 - ◇ “*Mufawada*”
- ◇ Benefits of having cultural and linguistic knowledge
 - ◇ Cultural-specific terms and expressions
 - ◇ Religious expressions: “*Inshallah*,” “*alhamdulillah*”
 - ◇ Tone used by participant and personal interpretation of transcriber

“*Alhamdulillah*”

I: So, this happened until you got adjusted, right?

P3: *Alhamdulillah*.

I: And you and him [your husband] now, are you okay? Are you facing any difficulties?

P3: (a bit hesitant) *Alhamdulillah*.

I: And the prices went up?

P6: Too much. I'm telling you, no one would rent this room [in the basement] for 5000. I rented it for 25,000... I told my husband, “*alhamdulillah*, I am being buried alive.” [laughs]

P15: Sometimes I don't like hearing their voice, because we would start crying... What can I do? It's too much for me [crying]. *Alhamdulillah*.