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Cultural Considerations in Parental Socialization: Study of Mothers From Five Israeli Minority Groups

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Abstract

Although the role of culture and context in parenting attitudes and practices has long been recognized, the current knowledge of cultural socialization processes in childhood remains limited. In this study, we examined how cultural considerations inform socialization processes in different national, religious, and immigrant groups in Israeli society. We analyzed 36 semi-structured interviews with mothers from five groups: Jewish ultra-Orthodox mothers, Bedouin-Arab mothers, Palestinian-Arab mothers from East Jerusalem, mothers of Ethiopian origin, and mothers of Former Soviet Union (FSU) origin. The interview protocol followed Cohen's parental awareness-level interview guideline. Four themes were developed, capturing cultural considerations in socialization processes: socialization goals, transgenerational transmission, communicating culture and religion in everyday parenting, and protecting against discrimination and racism. Our results provide theoretical and practical implications for working with parents from diverse backgrounds.

Keywords

culture, parents, socialization goals, transgenerational transmission

The family is the earliest context in which children are socialized in emotions and behaviors. Socialization takes place within a cultural context, shaped by beliefs, values, and ideals that are often influenced by factors, such as race, ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status (SES) (Chronis-Tuscano et al., 2022) Nevertheless, the current knowledge of cultural socialization processes in childhood remains limited (Aguayo et al., 2021). Drawing on in-depth interviews with mothers, we examined how cultural considerations inform socialization processes in different national, religious, and immigrant minority[1] groups in Israeli society.

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Culture and Parental Socialization

Socialization is a continuous process of social interaction through which children learn to become members of their society. However, the goals of socialization and the parenting strategies used to achieve them differ across cultural groups (Aguayo et al., 2021). Most psychological research on how parents influence their children's development has been conducted among White, middle-class families in the United States and other Western countries. As a result, there is limited understanding of parenting and socialization practices in non-Western regions (Raj & Raval, 2013). In recent years, socialization research has begun to incorporate culture into models (Aguayo et al., 2021; Streit et al., 2021). One example is Raval and Walker's (2019) model, which addresses three aspects of culture in emotion socialization: caregivers' socialization goals, caregivers' beliefs about emotion, and their preferences for communication. Much research that has examined cross-cultural differences in parental socialization has focused on cultural group differences between individualist and collectivist cultures (Rapp et al., 2022). Such studies argue that parents from Western cultures emphasize individualistic values, such as separation, autonomy, and independence, whereas parents from non-Western cultures emphasize collectivist values, such as interrelatedness, connectedness, and social hierarchy (Runge & Soellner, 2024). Nevertheless, many scholars (Sinha & Tripathi, 1994; Voronov & Singer, 2002) have criticized the oversimplistic dichotomous comparisons between Western/ individualistic/ egocentric and Eastern/ collectivist/ sociocentric cultures (Matsumoto & Yoo, 2006). One notable criticism of this bipolar dichotomy is that it ignores differences between subcultures within a certain "Westen" or "Eastern" category (e.g., Dutch vs. German), or the effects of other important categories, such as class, ethnicity, and education level (Voronov & Singer, 2002). For instance, based on an ethnographic study of parents and teachers in three communities in Manhattan and Queens (from wealthy to those on welfare), Kusserow (2004) described class differences in the socialization of individualism in America. Parents and teachers in Parkside adopted a "soft individualism," which involves protecting the child from harsh threats (e.g., through avoidance of critical discipline), while seeking to actualize the child's potentialities and abilities. In Queenston, however, parents and teachers adopted the "hard individualism" aimed at protecting children from violence, poverty, and misfortune by teaching them to have tough, resilient, and independent selves. Kelley residents also preferred the model of hard individualism, but emphasized the goals of upward striving and achievement rather than protecting the child from a harsh world. Moreover, previous studies suggested that individuals and societies may fluctuate between individualistic and collectivistic-oriented values, depending on circumstances. For example, Yamaguchi (1994) found that Japanese individuals might temporarily set aside their personal interests for the sake of the group if they anticipate future rewards from the group. Furthermore, it is important to distinguish individualism-collectivism orientation from the modernity vs. tradition comparison or majority vs. minority comparison. As Kagitcibasi (1997) suggested, the practices of ancestor worship, filial piety, subordination of women, and other presumed collectivist norms are best explained by traditional lifestyles rather than collectivist values. Previous studies have also challenged the practice of assuming minority groups are collectivists and majority groups are individualists (Oyserman et al., 2002). For example, studies have shown that, contrary to the individualism-collectivism dichotomy, the phenomenon of ingroup commitment or tribalism is common in individualistic societies, such as the United States (Weidman et al., 2020). Thus, rather than considering individualism-collectivism as a multidimensional construct, each element should be separately addressed.

The Current Study

The aim of this study was to explore how cultural considerations inform socialization processes. Our research questions were examined qualitatively, by analyzing interviews with mothers from

the different national, religious, and immigrant groups in Israel: Jewish ultra-Orthodox mothers, Bedouin-Arab mothers, Palestinian-Arab mothers from East Jerusalem, mothers of Ethiopian origin, and mothers of the Former Soviet Union (FSU) origin. We present here a short description of each group.

The Jewish ultra-Orthodox population in Israel consists of about 1,335,000, people, accounting for about 13.4 % of the country's population (Israel Democracy Institute, 2023). The average number of children in the ultra-Orthodox community is very high, with 6.9 children per woman versus 2.4 for non-ultra-Orthodox Jewish women. The ultra-Orthodox community can be characterized as a collectivist community, characterized by traditional gender roles and high religious affiliation (Hananel et al., 2022). Despite their low SES, most ultra-Orthodox Jews report a very good health status and have a relatively high life expectancy, attributed to high social cohesiveness (Tchernichovsky & Sharoni, 2015).

The population of individuals of Ethiopian origin in Israel comprises 168,800 inhabitants, accounting for 2% of the country's population. Approximately, 92,100 were born in Ethiopia, and 76,800 were Israeli-born with fathers born in Ethiopia. Many Ethiopian immigrants came from a rural, often illiterate society. Therefore, the transition to a modern, urban society was associated with integration problems including cultural gaps, poverty, social isolation, and increased rates of mental illness and delinquency (Walsh et al., 2015). Immigrants from Ethiopia also have poorer academic and employment achievements, which are not entirely explained by their lower SES (Feniger et al., 2021).

The population of individuals of FSU origin in Israel comprises 700,000 people, accounting for about 7% of the country's population (Israeli Democracy Institute, 2022). These immigrants, originating in Russia, Ukraine, and other former Soviet republics, were part of a massive immigration wave in the 1990s, which brought over a million Russian-speaking immigrants to Israel, mainly due to economic and political uncertainty in their countries of origin (Remennick, 2012). About 25% of these immigrants have a Jewish ancestry, but are not Jewish according to Orthodox religious law, as their mother is not Jewish (Raijman, 2009). Although they maintained their cultural values, FSU immigrants also achieved high levels of integration over the years, partially due to their high levels of education and cultural capital (Aroian et al., 2003). In this study, mothers of FSU origins were largely affiliated with "Generation 1.5" (Amit, 2018; Remennick, 2003), which refers to adults who were brought to Israel by their families as children or adolescents. Carrying with them the legacies of their early socialization in their homelands, these mothers nevertheless came of age in Israeli schools, military units, and colleges (Shevchenko & Lachover, 2023) and are characterized by higher level of Hebrew proficiency, higher sense of Israeli identity, and stronger Israeli social networks compared with first-generation immigrants (Amit, 2018).

The Bedouin population of the Negev, a distinct subgroup within the Muslim Arab minority in Israel, includes around 300,000 people (more than half are younger than 18 years of age), which makes up about 25% of the Negev population and 3% of the total country's population. Originating in nomadic tribes, the Bedouin society has a tribal, patriarchal structure, with the majority of Bedouin adhering to Islam (Yahel & Abu-Ajaj, 2021). Approximately, half of the Bedouin community in the Negev lives in unrecognized settlements, most of which are not connected to water or electricity. Around 30% of Bedouin women live in polygamous families, a factor that is associated with a higher risk for depression and health problems (Daoud et al., 2014). The Bedouin suffer from an acute shortage of educational, employment, and socioeconomic resources, and from high rates of violence and delinquency (Israel State Comptroller, 2023).

The Palestinian population in East Jerusalem includes 361,700 inhabitants, (which makes up 40% of the population of East Jerusalem and 3.6% of the country's population), living in a portion of Jerusalem that was held by Jordan after the 1948 Arab–Israeli War (Yaniv et al., 2022). This unique group of minority Arabs holds a hybrid identity, which falls between

Palestinian and Israeli identities (Shlomo, 2016). The Palestinians who live in Jerusalem today have been granted the status of "residents," which allows them to work at various jobs inside the borders of Israel and enjoy the social benefits of Israel's National Insurance Institute and state-mandated health funds. The "Israelization" of Palestinian society in Jerusalem is evidenced by the low birthrate, Western lifestyle, and integration into occupational and educational Israeli venues. On the contrary, there is also evidence of a parallel process of "Palestinization" in terms of culture, politics, and religion (Bartal, 2024). For example, Arab East Jerusalem schools, despite being under the formal aegis of Israel's Ministry of Education, adhere to Palestinian or Islamic educational programs which teach nationalistic Palestinian narratives as part of the curriculum taught in all the West Bank educational systems under the Palestinian Authority (Yair & Alayan, 2009). Other systems of separatism and resistance to Israeli rule can be seen in services and institutions such as the Waqf administration, the Islamic Sharia Court, public education, and health (Hasson, 1996).

Method

Data Collection

The study included interviews with 36 mothers of children (with at least one child $\leq$ 21 years). Ten ultra-Orthodox Jewish mothers, 10 mothers of Ethiopian background, six mothers of FSU background, five Bedouin mothers, and five Palestinians from East Jerusalem. Mothers' age ranged between 25 and 55 (mean = 35.03, SD = 7.76). Except for two participants, all the mothers were married. Five of the mothers were born in Ethiopia and three in the FSU. All others were born in Israel. The mothers had between one and seven children (mean = 3.44, SD = 1.56). Participants' background characteristics are presented in Table 1.

The recruitment approach included several strategies. First, we used snowball nonprobability convenience sampling (Barnes et al., 2021) by sharing posts on specified social media groups. Specifically, we shared posts in Facebook and WhatsApp groups for mothers of a certain background (e.g., Ethiopian origin). Posts for this project included information about the study and contact details of the research team. No cost was involved in generating these posts. Second, we used traditional snowball sampling (Chambers et al., 2020) by asking participants to forward the research opportunity to other participants. Attempts were made to represent the variety of subcultures within each minority group. Therefore, the ultra-Orthodox Jewish group of participants included members of the three main ultra-Orthodox sectors in Israel: Hasidic, Lithuanian, and Mizrahi (Brown, 2017). Within the Arab minority, we included both the Bedouin community and Palestinians from East Jerusalem, which represent two distinct groups in terms of socio-politic capital, civic rights, and resources.

In-depth semi-structured interviews were selected for data collection as they provided an opportunity to explore detailed accounts of the mothers' experiences of motherhood and aligned with our goal of drawing attention to the subjective meanings, experiences, and specific details of each mother. Due to our focus on parental socialization, the interview protocol followed Cohen's (2004) parental awareness-level interview guidelines, as described below (see Supplemental Material for the full interview protocol).

The interviews were conducted by four different members of the research team. Bedouin mothers and Palestinian mothers from East Jerusalem were interviewed in Arabic by a Palestinian-Arab research assistant, who was a mother herself. Ultra-Orthodox Jewish mothers were interviewed in Hebrew by a research assistant affiliated with the ultra-Orthodox community who was also a mother herself. Mothers of Ethiopian origin were interviewed in Hebrew by a research assistant of Ethiopian origin. Finally, mothers of FSU background were interviewed in Hebrew by a psychology graduate student with an immigration background. All interviewers had an

Table 1. Participants' Background Characteristics.

Group	Name	Age	Number of children	Children's age range	Marital status	Place of birth	Age at immigration	Education
Jewish Ultra-Orthodox	Gilla	28	4	1.5–7.5 years	Married	Israel		BA
	Chana	31	3	Two months–4 years	Married	Israel		BA
	Aliza	34	5	3–13 years	Married	Israel		Non-academic high education
	Miriam	30	4	Eight months–8 years	Married	Israel		High school
	Shoshana	25	2	1, 3.5 years	Married	Israel		Non-academic high education
	Chaya	28	6	Two months–5.5 years	Married	Israel		Non-academic high education
	Isca	25	2	2, 4 years	Married	Israel		Teaching college
	Shifra	25	2	1, 4 years	Married	Israel		BA
	Lea	32	5	3.5–11.5 years	Married	Israel		High school
	Sara	28	3	Two months–6.5 years	Married	Israel		Non-academic high education
Ethiopian origin	Tali	36	3	1.5–10 years	Married	Israel		BA
	Rachel	42	4	8 months–15 years	Divorced+ in relationship	Israel		High school
	Ziva	36	2	1, 5 years	Married	Israel		MA
	Gila	38	3	3.5–14 years	Married	Ethiopia	6	BA
	Liat	34	2	3.5, 12.5 years	Divorced+ in relationship	Ethiopia	2	Non-academic high education
	Meital	39	5	1.5–11 years	Married	Ethiopia	1.5	BA
	Keren	38	2	6, 8 years	Married	Ethiopia	8	BA
	Yamit	36	3	8 months −5 years	Married	Israel		Non-academic high education
	Sivan	42	4	1.5–19 years	Married	Ethiopia	12	Non-academic high education
	Orit	33	3	Three months–4 years	Married	Israel		Highschool
Former Soviet Union origin	Michal	55	2	21, 27 years	Married	FSU	11	BA
	Lena	49	3	15–28 years	Divorced	FSU	22	Highschool
	Karin	27	1	2 years	Married	Israel		MA
	Anna	27	2	1, 3 years	Married	Israel		High school
	Sharon	37	2	2, 5.5 years	Married	Israel		MA
	Anat	45	1	8 years	Married	FSU	20	MA

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Group	Name	Age	Number of children	Children's age range	Marital status	Place of birth	Age at immigration	Education
Palestinians from East Jerusalem	Yasmin	31	2	Two months, 5 years	Married	Israel		Non-academic high education
	Aya	30	4	Eight months–8 years	Married	Israel		High school
	Abeer	29	2	3.5, 5 years	Married	Israel		Non-academic high education
	Niveen	48	6	4–22 years	Married	Israel		High school
	Nadya	39	5	3–11 years	Married	Israel		BA
Bedouin of the Negev	Fatma	37	5	4–18 years	Married	Israel		High school, currently studies for BA
	Amira	32	4	5–11 years	Married	Israel		Non-academic high education
	Amal	39	7	2–22 years	Married	Israel		High school
	Lubna	32	6	6–12 years	Married	Israel		Elementary school
	Marwa	38	5	3–13 years	Married	Israel		Elementary school

academic degree in psychology, education, or another relevant degree in social sciences, with proven experience in qualitative research. For this study, the interviewers were trained in cross-cultural parenting research. All participants received information about the purpose of the interview in advance. They were told that the goal of the study was to learn about their experiences as mothers, their guiding values in raising their children, their sources of knowledge, and their social support. The interviews were preceded by informed consent, including the participants' permission to record the interviews. Standards of confidentiality were included in the consent form, as well as participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Except for three participants, all interviews were conducted online via the Zoom platform (with camera on). Three ultra-Orthodox mothers had no internet access due to Jewish religious laws that aim to limit exposure to a modern, secular lifestyle (Schejter & Marziano, 2023), and were therefore interviewed by telephone. All participants received a gift card (25$). Identifying characteristics were anonymized, and pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality. Interviews were taped and transcribed. To allow data access for all members of the research team (who were all fluent in Hebrew), transcripts were translated into Hebrew by a professional translator. The study protocol was approved by the university's institutional review board (IRB). Data were collected during 2021.

Parental Awareness-Level Interview Guidelines

To address cultural considerations in socialization processes, we used Cohen's (2004) parental awareness-level interview guidelines. The concept of parental awareness (Newberger, 1977) refers to the typical way in which parents tend to think about their child, understand their child's behavior, and perceive their role and functions as a parent. Therefore, it provides a compelling framework to understand parental socialization processes.

Both explicit and implicit parental beliefs have consistently been found to predict parental behavior in areas such as granting autonomy, punishment, and teaching styles (Crouch & Behl, 2001). To address the cognitive structure of parenthood, Newberger (1977) developed a format of a semi-structured reflective interview that permits both a standard set of questions to be asked and elaboration and expansion by the respondent using the respondent's own words and logic. The model defines four levels of parental awareness, ranging from egoistic orientation (parental reasoning is limited to the experience and needs of the parent), through the conventional orientation (parents perceive children's behavior in terms of external norms and values), the individualistic orientation (where parents identify and respond to the needs of a particular child), and to the process (systems) orientation (which is organized around the parent–child mutual relationship). Cohen (2004) further developed Newberger's (1977) research model for clinical use by replacing the original questions with questions more integral to a clinical interview or a therapy session with parents. Because parental systems of knowledge, beliefs, and thought are activated when the parent needs to make a decision related to the child, typical questions address how parents choose their children's after-school activities or how they decide about bedtime. For example, "Did you enroll your child in afterschool activities this year?" ("Which ones?" "How was this decided?") "Does the child have a fixed bedtime?" ("How was it established and why?") "Are you involved with the child's homework" ("Why?" "In what way?"). In addition, spontaneous descriptions by parents related to their own or the child's actions are usually followed up with questions inviting them to explain their reasoning.

Based on these tenets, our interview protocol started with interviewers asking mothers for general demographic information (e.g., marital status, education, number of children, and place of residence) and continued with questions about the women's transition to motherhood. Next, the mothers were asked to describe in detail a certain situation during which they faced a parental dilemma and how they felt and reacted. They were also asked to describe moments of joy with

their children, what sort of everyday challenges they met, and daily routines. Interviews were concluded with questions addressing available or needed support and knowledge resources.

Data Analysis

Interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2023). We began the analysis process by reading through all the interview transcripts to obtain a preliminary idea of participants' experiences as mothers and members of cultural or religious minority groups. Then, using both an inductive and theoretical approach, a series of analytic codes was generated from reading the data (inductive) and from the scholarly literature (theoretical). After developing the main codes, they were sorted into potential themes.

Reflexive Note. Thematic analysis is structured around the premise of an active and reflexive researcher (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Reflexivity involves the researcher's attentiveness to cultural aspects of the research context (Ide & Beddoe, 2023). It is particularly important when focusing on members of culturally and ethnic minorities that has been historically overlooked, misrepresented, or silenced (Milner, 2007), such as Bedouin, Palestinian, and Ethiopian origin mothers. The fact that the research was led by educated, Jewish, Israeli-born mothers required that we interpret how these scenarios respond to our cultural identities, professions, gender, and educational backgrounds (Bukamal, 2022). We acknowledge that the authors' background may hinder their understanding of parenting roles, values, and practices in different contexts (Novianti et al., 2023). To challenge assumptions of this kind, the research team included mothers and non-mothers members, representing diverse groups in the Israeli context, including a Palestinian-Arab, Jewish ultra-Orthodox, and those of Ethiopian and FSU origin. We were engaged in regular dialogue with the research team throughout the duration of the study to improve critical thinking, analysis, and writing. However, we also had to keep in mind that although interviewers shared religion and language with their interviewees, class, ethnicity, and socio-political identity differences may still exist (Joseph et al., 2021; Braun and Clarke, 2019). For example, Palestinian mothers from East Jerusalem were interviewed by a Palestinian-Arab from the North of Israel, a group with higher social capital and more civic rights. To maintain reflexivity, the interviewers kept a record of their interpretation and emotional reaction to the interviews. Moreover, we ensured that several researchers were involved in the analytic process to develop a richer, more nuanced reading of the data, rather than seeking a consensus on meaning.

Findings

Four different themes were developed, capturing cultural considerations in socialization processes: socialization goals, transgenerational transmission, communicating culture and religion in everyday parenting, and protecting against discrimination and racism.

Socialization Goals

Socialization goals refer to the characteristics parents' value and want their children to attain when they grow up. Our findings revealed that mothers from traditional, religious cultures, such as Bedouin, Palestinian-Arab, and Jewish ultra-Orthodox mothers, value socialization goals such as conforming to social hierarchy and religious norms. When observing and interpreting their children's behavior, these mothers referred to a religious lifestyle as a desired educational goal. For instance, Amal, a Bedouin mother of seven children, described how a religious lifestyle that includes faith and regular prayers is interpreted as an indicator of positive children's behavior:

> It is highly important for me to teach them how to respect others, their teachers, their grandparents. I also want them to engage in a great deal of pray . . . the prayer calms your soul. It is important for me that my children become educated and maintain their faith and always behave well. I want my children to be good people, study, and make a living.

However, as also noticed in the narratives of Niveen (a mother of six from East Jerusalem), and Shifra (a Jewish ultra-Orthodox mother of two), Amal perceives religious values and practices (i.e., respecting others, faith, and prayer) as inseparable from more individualistic-oriented socialization goals, such as pursuing education and career success. Niveen's words illustrate how a strong religious faith is associated with developing a strong, resilient personality:

> I want to see my children develop a strong personality, not impolite but one that enables them to stand up for their rights. If you deserve something, then fight the whole world to get it. I want to see them develop a strong religious faith. Beyond clothes, I want them to pray. Praying keeps you from many negative things and shows you the way.

Niveen's narrative not only disconnects Muslim faith from women's oppression but also suggests that socializing her daughters to believe in god and follow religious practices is a means of personal empowerment. Likewise, Shifra, a Jewish ultra-Orthodox mother, explains how social hierarchy, respect, and family ties are inseparable from personal success:

> It is very important to me that my children will be pious and follow God's will, and that they will care about each other and other people, that people will want to be near them . . . mostly, that they will succeed.

Together, these illustrations challenge the bipolar dichotomy between individualism and collectivism, suggesting that mothers from different cultures not only value both individualist and collectivist socialization goals, but also that collectivist goals are perceived as a means of achieving more individualistic ones. Interestingly, mothers from FSU origin were cautious about expressing their socialization goals. Growing up in an authoritarian, competitive culture, several mothers of this origin valued their children's autonomy, agency, and self-actualization, rather than achievements or success. As Anat, a mother of one child, said, "I want my son to grow up with a healthy sense of entitlement." Likewise, Sharon, a mother of two from the FSU, described how developing a child's autonomy was perceived as a key socialization goal:

> I grew up in a culture where children were like clay. If you wanted something to come out of it, then you had to mold it. If the clay was hard, then you had to mold it harder. When I became a mother, I asked myself what was more important to me: to tell my daughter what to do and have her obey, or to maintain a good, open relationship with her, and see her as a partner. I realized that I cared less about her agreeing with me. She could study what she wanted, dress as she wished. I just didn't want her to be disappointed; I wanted her to be happy and satisfied with her choices.

These examples reflect how mothers' own experiences of authoritarian and demanding parenting made them highly alert and sensitive to any kind of parental expectation. They favored positive parent–child relationships rather than achieving certain educational goals and tried to minimize conflicts by focusing on the child's needs and preferences. Karin's words (a mother of one child from FSU origin) illustrate the gentle negotiation between encouraging self-fulfillment socialization goals, and avoiding any pressure related to achieving these goals:

> I want him to be happy, have a loving family, loving friends. I want him to succeed in anything he wants. . . It might sound bad like I'm saying that he must succeed, but I just want him to find his own way. I want him to feel satisfied, to feel really passionate about his choices.

Transgenerational Transmission

The continuity and evolution of cultures across generations are dependent on cultural transmission. This process refers to how values, knowledge, and practices are passed down from one generation to the next (Corsaro, 1997). Transgenerational transmission of cultural values and practices is an important aspect of parental socialization because parents' childhood experiences (Leerkes et al., 2020) and their relationships with their cultural heritage (Kim et al., 2018) are related to how parents interact with their children and direct their behaviors. In the following examples, one can notice how FSU mothers' negative childhood experiences of authoritarian parenting have led them to perceive their children as highly vulnerable, requiring close attention and protection. Anna, a second-generation immigrant from the FSU, described how she tries to protect her child from being "wounded" the way she was, by avoiding experiences of deficit.

I see the influence of my own childhood all the time. I have many friends who say, "Whatever my mom did, I do the opposite, so that my children will not be as wounded as I am." I belong to this group of people. I let my daughter do everything I was not allowed to do as a child.

Sharon, another mother of FSU origin, described her need to compensate their children for their own childhood experiences of harsh and distant parenting by placing their children's needs at the center of attention:

> My life is organized around my son; I don't expect my child to adapt himself to our lives. This is the most significant difference from the way I grew up.

In a somewhat different manner, Bedouin mothers, Jewish ultra-Orthodox mothers, and Palestinian mothers from East Jerusalem were also preoccupied with protecting their children from transgenerational transmission of their heritage values. The following examples illustrate how, although mothers appreciated their religious and social heritage, they felt that they must attenuate its influence on their children's lives if they want them to succeed in today's world. Fatma, a Bedouin mother of five, described how she fought for her daughter's right for high education:

> My daughter wants to study abroad. I told her that higher education is a top priority and she should study wherever she feels it's right. People in our community will probably resist, saying that women should not study abroad, but although I am a woman I can stand on my own. If her grandfather comes and tells her she can't continue her education beyond high school, I will tell him, "No way. You are my father-in-law and I respect you but these are my children and I will never curtail their aspirations."

Meital, a mother of Ethiopian origin, described a similar negotiation between wanting her children to appreciate their Ethiopian heritage and also distancing them from collectivist values that could hinder their development, such as shyness, naivete, or passivity:

> I value the Ethiopian culture and heritage. It is important to know where you come from. But to allow my children to maximize their talents, I need to educate them differently from the way I was raised. My parents taught me to be humble, shy, a good housewife. I don't agree with these values. I teach my daughter to be modest to some extent but also to be assertive, to stand up for her rights, to demand what she needs. Be the boss, not an employee (Meytal).

Nadya, a Palestinian mother of five from East Jerusalem, emphasized the importance of perceiving and understanding herself and her daughter as unique human beings, separated and distinguished from previous generations:

> With time, I have realized that the way I was raised is not suitable for my children and that I should not learn from others. My baby is a unique person . . . so I decided to read and decide what works for me. I did not follow my mother or my mother-in-law . . . actually, I did the opposite of what my mother did.

Communicating Culture and Religion in Everyday Parenting

Educating children about cultural norms and values is a central aspect of parental socialization. Our interview data revealed that mothers who came from conservative, religious cultures often negotiated between educating their children to a religious lifestyle and attending to the child's needs, preferences, and capacities. For instance, Lea, an ultra-Orthodox Jewish mother of five, emphasized the flexible, empathic manner in which she teaches her daughter the religious rules:

> I always try to see things from her point of view, even when it comes to religious rules. For example, if she doesn't want to say the "asher yatzar"[2] blessing after leaving the bathroom, I explain its importance, but eventually, she can choose.

A similar example of how mothers balance between religious practices and responding to the child's individual needs may be seen in Miriam's words. Miriam, another Jewish ultra-Orthodox mother, described how she communicated her educational decisions with her 5-year-old son:

> We asked him if he wanted to start the next year in a kindergarten where the language spoken is Yiddish.[3] We told him that it would be good for him . . . he could learn another language . . . and he agreed, he was very eager to speak a new language. So, we registered him in this kindergarten, and he is extremely happy there. But the thing is that we asked him his opinion; we did not just move him to a new place and expect him to get along.

Marwa, a Bedouin mother of five, similarly described the importance of negotiating religious practices with her children, instead of forcing them. In the following example, Marwe portrayed a conflict with her daughter around wearing a Hijab:[4]

> In the beginning, she refused to wear it. Her cousins of the same age also expressed opposition, so [wearing it would have been] difficult for her; she did not want to be different . . . We decided to prepare her, saying that "next summer you will be wearing the Hijab, and your female cousins will be wearing it too," We explained that we are members of a conservative society and this is important for us. Gradually, thank God, she agreed.

Protecting Against Discrimination and Racism

Cultural and racial socialization processes, including messages emphasizing racial pride and heritage, preparing children for racial discrimination, promoting mistrust of other racial groups, and focusing on individual characteristics rather than racial group content, play a key role in parental socialization in marginalized groups (Anderson et al., 2021). Our findings suggest that parents' and children's past and present experiences of discrimination contributed to mothers' perception of their children as vulnerable, and sometimes helpless, individuals. These mothers felt that their children were continuously exposed to racism and microaggressions and, therefore, should be protected. Ziva, a mother of two from Ethiopian origin, described how she anxiously monitors her son's social interactions, being alert to potential signs of discrimination and social exclusion:

> It is extremely important to me to know what is going on in their lives, to make sure they are happy and safe. One day, I listened to one of my children's phone conversations and one of the kids asked him, "How does it feel to have no friends"? I was totally panicked; . . . Is there something I missed? Is he socially excluded?

Likewise, Yasmin, a Palestinian mother of two from East Jerusalem, described how experiences of political oppression and discrimination positioned both herself and her children in helpless situations:

> We stayed at a hotel for several days, and there were some dancing and singing activities by the pool. My daughter can't speak Hebrew. She just sat there and watched but could not take part in this activity. You feel that your children are socially excluded from a very young age. They can't take part; they just feel a constant misfit.

Interviews revealed that mothers used various strategies to protect their children from racism and microaggressions. Sivan, a mother of Ethiopian origin, described how she helped her son to manage racist microaggressions in school by constructing a positive image of his difference:

> My son is the only Ethiopian child in his class. Sometimes, children bully him. It's not exactly racism . . . but it reminds me of my own childhood. When things like this happen, I first take him to the mirror and ask him to look at himself. I ask him: "Do you see a dirty Ethiopian? I just see my lovely son. Some people are so ignorant that they don't see you. So what? People come in many forms and colors; we should accept everyone."

Overall, these texts suggest that mothers of minority groups are highly alert to expressions of microaggressions, and thus have developed various strategies to protect their children. Such strategies range from avoiding the issue of color and racism, supporting a positive self-image, and active involvement in children's social interactions.

Discussion

We examined how cultural considerations inform socialization processes in different national, religious, and immigrant groups in Israeli society. Based on semi-structured interviews, several themes have been developed, representing different cultural considerations. The first theme, socialization goals, considers the characteristics that parents value and encourage their children to develop. The literature refers to socialization goals as an important aspect of parental beliefs that are informed by parents' cultural values and norms (Keller et al., 2006). For example, parents in cultures that value hierarchy and interdependence may encourage their children to regulate and suppress their emotions more readily than parents in cultures that encourage assertiveness and authentic self-expression (English & John, 2013). Consistent with previous cross-cultural research (Park et al., 2014), our findings pointed to cultural differences in socialization goals. Mothers from traditional and religious cultures, such as the Bedouin mothers, Jewish ultra-Orthodox mothers, and to a lesser extent, Palestinian and Ethiopian mothers, considered hierarchy, family ties, and social cohesiveness as key socialization goals (as Sivan, a mother of Ethiopian origin, said: "children should always understand that family is a top priority; everything else comes after"). Mothers of FSU origin, on the contrary, placed greater emphasis on the child's autonomy, authenticity, and agency, as well as the maximization of the child's talents and skills. Nevertheless, our results also align with the accumulating body of evidence that challenges the bipolar dichotomy between collectivist and individualistic cultures (Kusserow, 2004; Voronov & Singer, 2002). Specifically, the interview data revealed that presumed collectivist socialization goals, such as religious faith, humbleness, authority, and ancestor worship, are used

by parents to enhance children's personal development in terms of social status, future earnings, and independence. For example, several Jewish and Muslim religious mothers explained how educating their children to be religious and faithful people actually laid the groundwork for their future education and employment. Moreover, these findings also challenge the assumption that minority groups are affiliated with collectivist cultures (Kagitcibasi, 1997; Oyserman et al., 2002), suggesting that collectivist and individualist socialization goals may be intimately interwoven and more inseparable than stereotypically thought, especially among cultures in transition (Ward et al., 2018).

Another cultural consideration in socialization was transgenerational transmission. Our findings suggest that transgenerational transmission may play an important role in how mothers perceive and guide their children's behaviors. For instance, we found that 1.5-generation mothers of FSU origin often held ambivalent attitudes toward their legacies (Remennick & Prashizky, 2022) and perceived traditional Soviet models of parenting as parent-centered, harsh, and distant. As a result, these mothers adopted a child-centered model, in which children's needs and preferences are prioritized, and the parents' role is to follow their children rather than guide them (Chernyaeva, 2010). The other mothers in our study, such as Bedouin mothers, Jewish ultra-Orthodox mothers, and Palestinian mothers from East Jerusalem, expressed more identification and internalization of their cultural heritage and tried to transmit many of its values to their children. Nevertheless, these mothers felt obliged to attenuate the influence of their tradition when they felt it might hinder other socialization goals. For example, a few mothers of Ethiopian origin encouraged their children to adopt traditional cultural values, such as respect for the elderly, family ties, and interdependence. At the same time, they challenged their children's conformity when they interpreted it as a sign of weakness or passivity. These findings suggest that mothers from different cultures hold a critical perspective of their cultural legacies and are constantly negotiating between tradition and modernity.

In line with previous studies of parents from marginalized groups (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019), our findings point to ethnic and racial socialization processes. For instance, Posey (2017) reported that Black parents relied on both their own and their children's experiences with racial discrimination in schools and the broader community to shape their views about the potential challenges their children might face. We found that parents' personal and institutional experiences of discrimination may encourage them to adopt more engaged and vigilant parenting practices, such as close monitoring, aimed to protect children from the harmful effects of racial bias (Varner et al., 2020). We also found that parents communicate messages that emphasize racial pride, social and racial tolerance, and the importance of judging individual characteristics rather than the groups (Anderson et al., 2021).

Given that parental socialization and mentalization processes are intimately linked (Runge & Soellner, 2024; Willies, 2025), further research should explore the role of culture and context in the way parents perceive, understand, and interpret their children's mental states; Luyten et al., 2020, 2024). Although the key role of parental mentalization in children's healthy development has been well-recognized (Moreira et al., 2025), the role of culture and context in parental mentalization has traditionally been overlooked in psychological research (Aival-Naveh et al., 2019, 2022). This systematic lack of research and theory has seriously limited clinicians' and researchers' capacity to evaluate and treat parents from different cultures (Law et al., 2021).

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, our study was limited by including only mothers, overlooking the way fathers' socialization processes are informed by culture (de Mendonça et al., 2021). Therefore, future studies should address the role of both parents' cultural perceptions, and the interaction of these perceptions, in parental socialization. Second, this study was limited by

the small and unrepresentative sample. The use of the snowball sampling method, although effective in recruiting hard-to-reach populations, limits our ability to generalize our results to other members of a certain cultural or ethnic group. In addition, our sample may overrepresent parents with higher levels of interest, awareness, or concerns regarding their parenting or child development and higher levels of motivation and trust in research (Ben-Sasson & Yom-Tov, 2016; Nathe et al., 2023). Another limitation is including mothers with a wide age range of their children. While this fact would be inevitable in mothers with a large number of children, it is clear that socialization processes greatly differ with children's age (England-Mason et al., 2023). Methodologically, conducting interviews by both telephone and Zoom may affect participants' and interviewers' experiences and the course of the interview (Oliffe et al., 2021). Therefore, we could not exclude the possibility that our data quality was affected by the medium we used.

Theoretical and Clinical Implications

This study embodies theoretical and practical implications for working with parents from diverse populations. Theoretically, the study contributes to the growing interest in understanding how culture informs parental socialization (Chronis-Tuscano et al., 2022). Moreover, this study provides a more nuanced view of parental socialization goals, which have traditionally been constructed as "Western/ Individualistic" vs. "Eastern/Collectivist" (Triandis & Suh, 2002). Similar to other scholars (Park et al., 2014; Voronov & Singer, 2002), our findings suggest that a dichotomous comparison may not fully capture the complexity of today's parenting, especially in mothers with hybrid cultural identities who must continuously negotiate different values. On a practical level, this study may assist professionals in developing interventions for diverse populations. Considering culture in family interventions is a multidimensional process and includes a deep understanding of how culture and context are related to mental health, including cultural idioms of distress, ideals of mental health, therapy expectations, and therapeutic relationships (Kaiser & Jo Weaver, 2019; Slobodin & Ziv-Beiman, 2021).

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Data Availability Statement

Data supporting this research will be available upon request from the corresponding author.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Ethics Approval Statement

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Informed Consent

All participants signed an informed consent.

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Notes

1. There are ongoing scholarly and political debates about the definition of minority. These debates challenge the demographic or numeric definition of minority and focus on power differences. For example, Gaon and Rubinstein (2021) suggested that given Israel's political structure, non-liberal and ultra-Orthodox minority groups use their political influence to grant members of their groups greater rights and consistently weaken the interests and values of Israel's secular majority group. We acknowledge the importance of this debate. However, in this study, we defined minority groups on a demographic (numeric) basis.
2. The Jewish blessing "asher yatzar" ("who has formed man") is recited after one excretes/urinates to thank God for enabling one to do so.
3. A West Germanic language historically spoken by Ashkenazi Jews.
4. A head covering conventionally worn by many religious Muslim women as an expression of faith.

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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