**Proposal for Paper: The contribution of unique risk factors for adolescents living in Israel’s Ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities**

*Dr. Chen Chana Lifshitz, Faculty of Social Work, Ashkelon Academic College, Ashkelon, Israel.*

*Dr. Shlomit Shahino-Kesler, Senior Researcher, Haredi Institute for Public Affairs, Jerusalem, Israel.*

*Dov Goldberg, Researcher, Haredi Institute for Public Affairs, Jerusalem, Israel.*

Adolescents in Israel’s Ultra-Orthodox Jewishcommunities exposed to modern lifestyles face risks and challenges, given the disparities between their educational and social frameworks and the general society’s norms and values. Adjusting to and dropping out of school are often key points in disengaging from the community, precipitating risky behaviours: drug and alcohol use, criminal activity, and potentially abusive sexual encounters. COVID-19 exacerbated Ultra-Orthodox teenagers’ risks, as most, lacking internet access, could rarely engage in distance learning during school closures.

This study examines specific factors affecting Ultra-Orthodox adolescents, including religious beliefs and coping with unfamiliar school environments. The study also analyses general social risks facing them, whether individual – ADHD and other pedagogic and socialisation challenges, exposure to criminal peer activity – or familial, including parental marital relationships, familial ties, inadequate supervision, no parental engagement with schools, and more.

The study incorporates a survey of ultra-Orthodox youths aged 14–18 living in Jerusalem, at various stages of disengagement from and/or dropping out of school, conducted by the Institute for Policy Studies together with Israel’s Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem Municipality. It gathers social and demographic data on these youth, their personalities, families, school integration experiences, and educational and behavioural risks they have been exposed to, and analyses them in relation to academic, behavioural, and emotional risk categories.

 This comparative study highlights a closed religious society’s unique risks, enabling social workers and educational professionals to better understand specific risk areas and to counter disengagement more effectively in its early stages.

**Keywords**: School disengagement/dropout; youth at risk; Ultra-Orthodox Jewish religious communities; faith schools; community, familial, and personal risk factors.

Dr. Gemma Banks

Journal Manager

*Educational Review*

Dear Dr. Banks,

In response to your call for papers for the forthcoming special issue of *Educational Review* on “A re-view of educational inequalities,” we are pleased to enclose our paper’s draft abstract on the unique risk factors of adolescents in Israel’s Ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities.

The research addresses the challenges faced by adolescents living in Israel’s closed Ultra-Orthodox communities, seeking to identify specific risks these youth face, in addition to risks described in other studies. This research was undertaken following the expansion of states of risk resulting from COVID-19, Israel’s Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem municipality seeking to adjust the existing services to meet the youths’ new states of risk.

 The proposal meets the aims of the special issue by examining the challenges of diversity within Israel’s complex society, viewing them in relation to unique areas of educational inequality challenging the Ultra-Orthodox community and the wider polity. The paper addresses specifics of this dynamic in new ways, examining socioeconomic polarities, problematic adolescent behaviour, and issues of identity, class, religion, and tradition in a unique context. It also analyses the evolving interplay between these categories, thereby helping further refine theoretical perspectives and practical policy on such “wicked problems”. The authors, with considerable experience in this field, will receive significant support from educational and other official institutions to produce data never before so mined.

Thank you for considering our proposal. I would be happy to provide any other information you require and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Sincerely,

Dr. Chen Lifshitz

Faculty of Social Work,

Ashkelon Academic College

chenl@erech-nosaf.co.il; +972-50-310-9162