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Title: Violence Exposure in Multiple International Communities: The Role of Social Relationships in Processes of Risk and Protection

Text: A greater understanding of how resilience factors may attenuate the effects of violence exposure is critical to understanding the impact of global violence on youth. This paper symposium will explore the consequences of violence exposure for youth living in dangerous communities around the world, including two communities in Israel – Dimona and Sderot – and The Gambia, West Africa. We will focus on exposure to distinct forms of violence – including youth violence, terror violence, and community violence – their psychological and behavioral consequences – and potential resilience factors that may protect against violence exposure effects. Studies will present research conducted in international violent communities, exploring how different aspects of supportive relationships may act as resilience factors for youth who are exposed to violence as it relates to internalizing and externalizing outcomes. This paper symposium is unique in its ability to examine the role of social relationships as a buffer of risk across a multitude of violent international communities; we will have the ability to examine processes of protection

between and within diverse global contexts.

Initial comparisons between the distinct communities indicate that the role of friend support may have differential effects depending on the outcome examined. For example, in Dimona, Israel, social support from friends might serve as a powerful protective resource during exposure to terrorism in curbing depression symptoms, but that in the absence of terror bombing stress, social support from friends may also be associated with increased distress, potentially inciting risk as well as resilience. In Sderot, Israel, located a half mile from the rocket attacks of the Gaza Strip, support from friends appears to act as a risk for increased adolescent violence perpetration when youth were exposed to terror violence and community violence. However, support from school is directly associated with less violent behavior, despite violence exposure. In The Gambia, results indicated that a strong connection to family and hope for the future may attenuate the effects of youth violence exposure and PTSD symptoms.

Ways in which such rich information can capitalize on existing strengths within these communities and bolster key social relationships despite ongoing environmental risk will be discussed. As well, potential prevention initiatives around violence exposure, ways to inform international and U.S. based prevention efforts, and implications for translating research into action will be discussed.

Theme Groups: 1 Key social relationships

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