

Symposium Title: From Trauma to Peace: Global Perspectives on Youth in Conflict Settings

Integrative statement:

Over 1 billion young people are affected by global conflict. Psychological science has unique and important contributions to understanding, healing, and preventing such violence. This symposium brings together papers that not only document the harmful effects of political violence and trauma on youth, but also, the ways that young people actively and constructively try to address conflict.

Discussant: Laura K. Taylor, University College Dublin

**Paper 1**

Title: Adolescent emotional security amid dynamic interactions of community safety and violence in Honduras

Authors:

\*Franklin Moreno, Temple University, USA

Sarah Hoegler Dennis, Notre Dame, USA

Paul Boxer, Rutgers, USA

E. Mark Cummings, Notre Dame, USA

Abstract:

The city of San Pedro Sula (SPS), Honduras, has ranked among the top fifty cities around the world with highest levels of homicides for over a decade. The community conditions of safety and insecurity in SPS are shaped by organized gang violence, responses of neighborhood residents, and by governmental policies that include expanding civilian-military law enforcement agencies as well as violence reduction programs. Our research integrates exposure to community violence (ECV) models, emotional security theory (EST), and ecological systems theory to understand the effects of violence exposure on youth functioning and adaptation in SPS. From an ECV perspective, children and adolescents may be exposed to violence in the home, at school, and across the neighbourhood (Boxer & Sloane, 2013). From an EST perspective, emotional security is a primary mechanism for how children adapt or not to social conflict, which develops early in the contexts of family relationships within the home. Research with adolescents shows how emotional security varies with exposure to political and non-political violence in the community (Cummings et al., 2016). Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1993) posits children's individual development occurs within multiple nested systems: microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems. Individuals and social groups affecting neighbourhood conditions of insecurity and safety encompass multiple

ecological systems. For instance, youth may have direct and violent interactions (microsystems) with police officers, gang members, and other community members. Police agencies also encompass macrosystems given that their authority to use violence is established by governmental laws. This paper draws on a few studies: (1) focus group research with 14-22-year-olds (N=60) on their experiences with safety and insecurity in general, and their experiences with law enforcement; (2) a cross-sectional study with 12-17-year-olds (N=185) using an emotional security measure developed and a modified exposure to violence measure based on our qualitative research. In this paper, we discuss some of the ways in which youth emotional security varies by interactions with police, gangs, family, and the general community, and conclude with implications on youth adjustment and future directions in research examining exposure to multiple forms of violence.

## **Paper 2**

**Title:** Creative Arts Therapies for the Improvement of PTSD Symptoms in young people: A meta-analysis with a focus on under-represented groups

Authors:

\*Briana Applewhite, University of Oxford Department of Psychiatry, Centre for Eudaimonia & Human Flourishing, Oxford, UK

Brennan Delattre, University of Oxford Department of Psychiatry, Oxford, UK

Prof Olivia Spiegler, University of Oxford, Nuffield College, Oxford, UK; University of Applied Sciences Goettingen, Germany

Professor Ilina Singh, University of Oxford, Department of Psychiatry, NEUROSEC, Wellcome Centre for Ethics & Humanities, Oxford, UK

Professor Morten Kringelbach, University of Oxford Department of Psychiatry, Centre for Eudaimonia & Human Flourishing, Oxford, UK

Abstract:

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a psychiatric disorder that develops after exposure to a traumatic event. The prevalence of PTSD, specifically in young people, is increasing globally, and evidence-based interventions show variable success. Therefore, there is a growing need for additional treatment options such as Creative Arts Therapies (CATs), including music, dance, art and drama. The aim of the systematic review and meta-analysis is to summarize the promising results reported for CATs and provide novel insights into their potential applications for PTSD. This meta-analysis has been preregistered with PROSPERO. The databases PubMed, PsycINFO, Web of Science, ProQuest, CINAHL, & Medline (OVID) were used for the literature search. The inclusion criteria were comprised of experimental studies, participants with symptoms of PTSD, a creative arts intervention that measured PTSD symptoms pre- and post-intervention, and a mean age of 18 or younger. Among the identified and screened articles, 26 out of 83 met the inclusion criteria involving a total of 2,135 participants [ $\bar{x}$  age  $\pm$ SD 12.76  $\pm$  2.58; range (4-18)] Pooled effect sizes indicated large pre-post treatment reduction in PTSD scores after a CAT intervention (Cohen's  $d = 0.93$ , 95% CI [0.65, 1.21],  $p < 0.001$ ). A subgroup analysis was performed in 3 different cultural contexts to explore the effectiveness of CATs on different ethnic groups. There was a large effect size in the reduction of PTSD symptoms particularly

in West Africa (n= 1,722 participants) (Cohen's  $d = 0.85$ , 95% CI [0.77, 0.94],  $p < 0.001$ ) and the Middle East (n=243) (Cohen's  $d = 1.71$ , 95% CI [1.61, 1.80],  $p < 0.001$ ) in comparison to North America (Cohen's  $d = 0.63$ , 95% CI [-0.76, 2.01],  $p < 0.38$ ). CATs are an effective intervention for young people with symptoms of trauma and PTSD, especially among West-African and Middle Eastern populations. However, due to the limited number of studies, future research on the effectiveness of CATs among young people is needed along with more studies analysing the cultural effectiveness of these therapies.

### **Paper 3**

**Title:** The Peace Generation in Colombia: Developing a Youth Peacebuilding Scale

Authors:

\*Claudia Pineda Marin, Fundacion Universidad Konrad Lorenz, Colombia

Vivien Liu, University College Dublin, Ireland

Valentina Duarte, Fundacion Universidad Konrad Lorenz, Colombia

Laura K Taylor, University College Dublin, Ireland

Abstract:

Almost a decade after a seminal peace agreement ending 50 years of war in Colombia, this presentation examines the peacebuilding potential of adolescents and young adults. Using mixed methods, we first explore how adolescents (n = 31, 55% female, ages 14-17, M = 15.37, SD = 1.27) and young adults (n = 29, 72% female, ages 18-24, M = 20.10, SD = 1.80) understand and articulate peacebuilding in their context. Themes that emerged include motivations and barriers to participating in peacebuilding, the importance of protest art, demilitarizing, and symbols of peace. Second, we report on the development of the Youth Peacebuilding Scale (YPS) in Colombia. In wave 1, we survey adolescents (n = 406, 52% female, ages 14-17, M = 15.20, SD = 1.13) and young adults (n = 400, 46% female, ages 18-24, M = 20.94, SD = 2.11) on both experience and attitudes across different types of peacebuilding behaviours (e.g., voting, protesting, signing petitions, participating in political or social discussions). Finally, we compare the themes from the focus groups and the findings on the YPS development to three other contexts: one with ongoing conflict (Israel), another roughly one generation after the signing of a peace agreement (Northern Ireland), and the third characterized by social divides but without a history of conflict (Switzerland). The implications for promoting youth peacebuilding, and the ways it manifests cross-culturally, are discussed.

\*Presenting Author