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The Construct of Resilience and its Application to the Context of Political Violence

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This article is intended to be the first in a series of inquiries into the theory and application of the construct of resilience. The article begins by providing a synopsis of the history, conceptualization, and significance of the construct across various fields of scientific examination. This first section focuses explicitly on the complexity of resilience. The next section follows with a discussion of whether the construct—in light of its most basic and established tenets—is applicable to the context of political violence. It does so by presenting analyses of data collected from youth and young adults living in the conflict-affected regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Gaza and the West Bank, Palestine. It is clear from this data that the majority of these individuals reported levels of psychosocial functioning consistent with principles identified in resilience theory.

Introduction

The allure of resilience arises from the success stories of people who have dealt with seemingly insurmountable odds and has inspired hope that human growth and progress are always possible no matter the odds. This idea of resilience has brought about divergent notions of human capacity. One notion maintains that individuals cannot be faulted for failure to surmount challenging circumstances. Another makes the case that there is something innate and extraordinary about those individuals who are able to overcome difficulty. To further complicate things, there is a third perspective that gives primary attention to the adversity itself by taking into account the circumstances that require resilience. These diverse frames of reference have generated much interest among scientists committed to understanding the nature of human functioning. This article is an attempt to provide a review of resilience as it exists in the literature today.

History

Why humans function the way they do has preoccupied science. For centuries scientists have studied the human capacity to function despite challenging and life-threatening circumstances (Campbell, 1970; Cicchetti, 2006; Richardson, 2002). It was not until the 1960s and 1970s, however, that a systematic study of resilience transpired. Scientific researchers began to make far-reaching efforts to explore the prevention and treatment of mental health problems in children (Garmezy, 1971; Murphy, 1974; Rutter, 1979). It is alongside this prolonged, extensive attempt to study mental health (and more specifically developmental psychopathology) that the notion of resilience is widely considered to have originated (Masten, 2006).

The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2009) definition of resilience is: 1) *the capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress* and 2) *an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change*. Resilience, in the present article, is discussed in relation to the second definition, but it is further elaborated according to the relevant literatures as *good psychological functioning or outcome despite suffering risk experiences or stress that would be expected to threaten adaptation or development or cause future psychological distress* (Bonanno, 2004; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 2006). This definition and its accompanying theory have become important constructs in numerous fields of scientific research (e.g., developmental and clinical psychology, trauma and disaster studies) and are becoming increasingly implicated in humanitarian and intervention programs—particularly regarding young people exposed to difficult environments (e.g., community violence, ethnopolitical conflict, and war) (Annan, Blattman, & Horton, 2007; Bonanno, 2008; Luthar, 2000).

The findings from this broad base of research have contributed to the development of the construct of resilience over the course of half a century and are commonly partitioned into four waves of research. The first wave is represented by the work of the pioneering resilience researchers (among them, Norman Garmezy, Lois Murphy, Michael Rutter, Alan Sroufe, Arnold Sameroff, and Emmy Werner) who sought to make known which qualities—usually called risk and protective factors—were responsible for healthy or unhealthy psychological functioning due to circumstances, both internal and external to the individual. The movement sparked the creation of a "short list" of such qualities that are typically considered protective factors believed to predict normative functioning in high-risk conditions. Examples of protective factors are good self-perception, strong cognitive abilities, close relationships with others, and access to healthcare (see Table 1 for a full list); examples of risk factors are parental mental illness, poor internal locus of control, and lack of educational achievement. This list has become quite extensive by encompassing a large number of the personal and environmental attributes that are typically associated with a variety of life-course pathways across diverse backgrounds and conditions (Masten, 2001). The short list is frequently consulted in multiple areas of investigation into the construct (see Olsson, Bond, Burns, Vella-Brodrick, & Sawyer, 2003, for a summary of psychosocial factors looked at by resilience researchers).

Having established a general pool of protection-promoting factors, the second wave gained momentum as a probe into the processes that accompany the items in the short list. That is, scientists questioned *how* risk and protection actually disrupts, maintains, or strengthens healthy functioning (Masten & Garmezy, 1985).

A push to bring resilience research more quickly to the applied sciences (e.g., psychiatry and clinical psychology) led to the third wave. This wave was largely represented

Table 1: Protective Factors for Psychosocial Resilience in Children and Youth

Within the Child	
	Good cognitive abilities, including problem-solving and attentional skills
	Easy temperament in infancy; adaptable personality later in development
	Positive self-perceptions; self-efficacy
	Faith and a sense of meaning in life
	A positive outlook on life
	Good self-regulation of emotional arousal and impulses
	Talents valued by self and society
	Good sense of humor
	General appeal or attractiveness to others
Within the Family	
	Close relationships with care-giving adults
	Authoritative parenting (high on warmth, structuring/monitoring, and expectations)
	Positive family climate with low discord between parents
	Organized home environment
	Post-secondary education of parents
	Parents with qualities listed as protective factors with a child (above)
	Parents involved in child's education
	Socioeconomic advantages
Within Family or Other Relationships	
	Close relationships to competent, pro-social, and supportive adults
	Connections to pro-social and rule-abiding peers
Within the Community	
	Effective schools
	Ties to pro-social organizations, including schools, clubs, scouting, etc.
	Neighborhoods with high "collective efficacy"
	High levels of public safety
	Good emergency social services (e.g., 911 or crisis nursery services)
	Good public health and health care availability

by a renewed social drive to enlighten the domains of prevention, intervention, and policy science that were seeking ways to better aid at-risk children (see Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000, for a discussion of the application of resilience to interventions and social policies).

The fourth wave, which is currently in ascendency, comprises an attempt to integrate the first three waves of resilience research across multiple levels of analysis, including but not limited to biological, environmental, and psychological systems. Further, this wave incorporates recent major technological advances in the design of new research on the foundation of earlier resilience work. The fourth wave may itself be part of a larger wave of scientific research focused on transdisciplinary collaboration (see Masten, 2007, for a table of "hot spots" for multilevel integration of adaptive systems implicated in resilience research). In this way, the construct has even greater potential to extend its relevance beyond an already sizable community of researchers (Lester, Masten, & McEwen 2006; Masten & Obradovic, 2006; Rutter, 2006), and may thereby eventually enter its fifth wave of research. One may speculate that the fifth wave will involve endeavors to further publicize and make more widespread use of the construct by coalescing it into the political and governmental regulation that affects the quality of life.

The Definition and Operationalization of Resilience

Studies of resilience have led to extensive debate about the operationalization of the term "resilience" and its meaning. The conceptualization of resilience has evolved over the course of 40 years, and, although inconsistencies and other problems with the construct are evident, most treatments of resilience appear to be grounded on a simple question: why do some children develop normatively in the midst of adverse circumstances, while others do not? This question makes two presumptions. The first is that there are individuals who are functioning well, even in the face of adversity. The second is that there are circumstances or conditions that work to obstruct healthy functioning. Early dialogue and research to discover an answer to this question popularized terms such as "invincible," "invulnerable," "stress-resistant," and "resilient" (Anthony & Cohler, 1987). These terms eventually became part of a commonly used vocabulary in resilience literatures to describe these well-functioning but at-risk people. Today, however, "resilience," "resiliency," and "resilient" have become the most widely-used terms.

Resilience has been variously defined across the relevant literatures, but most definitions generally fall under one of two categories: outcome and process. In discussing the end result of a person's experience, resilience has been defined as "the phenomenon that some individuals have a relatively good outcome despite suffering risk experiences that would be expected to bring about serious sequelae" (Rutter, 2007). In discussing *how* individuals deal with an experience, resilience has been defined as "a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar, 2000) or "normal development under difficult conditions" (Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Higgitt, & Target, 1994). Masten, Best, and Garmezy (1990) incorporated both of these definitional perspectives by stating resilience is "the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances." Bonanno (2004) added a developmental component to his definition by arguing that resilience "pertains to the ability of adults in otherwise normal circumstances who are exposed to an isolated and potentially highly disruptive event to maintain relatively stable, healthy levels of psychological and physical functioning." Further, an alternative definition by Block and Block (1980) has asserted that resilience is a personal characteristic of an individual. Likely the most prominent definition

is that resilience "refers to the finding that some individuals have a relatively good psychological outcome despite suffering risk experiences that would be expected to bring about serious sequelae" (Rutter, 2006). In any case, how to and who should define resilience are highly complex questions that will need to be answered in the future (Masten, 1999).

Aside from this matter of construct definition is the issue of operationalization—that is, how the term is manifested or measured. It appears that the main strategy for operationalizing resilience has been to quantify factors believed to promote or inhibit resilience. As noted above, among the variety of frameworks for identifying such factors, much of the work has focused on *protective* and *risk* factors.

A *protective factor* is a measurable characteristic of an individual or his or her circumstances believed to predict positive functioning in the context of adversity (Masten & Reed, 2002). Protective factors are sometimes called "assets" or "resources" and are generally considered as particularly important when adversity is present (Hobfoll, 1991). Protective factors usually fall into one of four broad categories: 1) within the child, 2) within the family, 3) within other relationships, and 4) within the community. A *risk factor* (or more simply, *risk*) is a measurable characteristic of an individual or his or her situation believed to impede positive functioning or outcome or to predict negative functioning or outcome (Masten & Reed, 2002). Risk is sometimes called "adversity," "threat," or "stress" (Bonanno, 2004; Hobfoll, 1989; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Both features of resilience are assessed via gradients of increasing protection or risk for a given variable. Further, both protective and risk factors can vary in "weight" depending on the person and context (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Finally, c*umulative protection* or *cumulative risk* is the combined (i.e., accumulated) presence of multiple protective or risk factors across time and domains of competence (Masten & Reed, 2002).

The Complexities of Resilience as a Concept

Ambiguities in Labeling

The construct of resilience is a starting point from which to learn about the origins and course of individual patterns of development (Sroufe & Rutter, 1984). While resilience is rooted in developmental psychopathology research, the theoretical framework of resilience is now becoming grounded in a number of domains of scientific inquiry: genetic, physiological, cognitive, socioeconomic, and cultural, among others (Enoch, 2006; Murphy & Moriarty, 1976; Sameroff & Rosenblum, 2006; Sroufe, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1982). Given such broad and diverse attention, it is unsurprising that the concepts of resilience are numerous and have been the subject of a number of scientific concerns, challenges, and criticisms. The following explications are meant to present some of the primary conceptual features of resilience.

Again, most noticeable among the challenges to resilience theory is the lack of consensus on the proper terminology. One might raise the concern of how the construct can be effectively integrated across various scientific domains or applied to real-world settings if findings cannot be successfully classified. The variation of terminology across the resilience literatures can result in dissonant findings where, theoretically, they should not be found. Needless to say, such instances naturally create problems (Luther, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000a).

Variations in labeling that cause confusion include, for example, use of the noun "resiliency" and the adjective "resilient" (Bonanno, 2004; Hansson, et al. 2008; Punamäki,

Quota, & El-Sarraj 2001; Richardson, 2002). This inconsistency persists despite calls by some specialists for recognition that the implied meanings of "resiliency" and "resilient"—while perhaps undetectable to the layperson—are quite different from the implied meaning of "resilience" (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000a). In short, resiliency is believed to imply some kind of personal characteristic and resilient is believed to imply a characteristic trait of an individual. Calls for caution when employing certain terminology are not to suggest that resilient and resiliency have no place in writings on resilience research; rather, it seems individuals who raise these issues acknowledge the value of thoughtfully considering the nuances of language.

Another illustration of the inconsistency of terminology is the use of the labels "invulnerable" and "invincible." It is noteworthy, however, that these terms receive much harsher criticism than those that surround the word resilient and are less commonly used. Finally, although resilience researchers raise the question of whether to retain or dispose of resilience as a term altogether, most argue for its continued indispensability (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Rutter, 2006).

Distinguishing Protective and Risk Factors

One of the longest-standing objectives in resilience research entails how best to distinguish between protective and risk factors. A protective factor is generally considered something that mediates the effect of a risk to benefit the individual in some way or predict a desirable outcome. This notion of a tug of war between competing variables (e.g., SES status and substance use among youth) that may aid or threaten an individual may seem straightforward, but it is debatable whether protection and risk are necessarily opposites. In using the above example, one could not say directly that impoverished youth are more likely to abuse substances than are affluent youth; in fact, evidence shows the contrary even though, generally, one might assume financial security would routinely indicate protection and poverty would indicate risk (Luthar & D'avanzo, 1999).

Conversely, as Masten (2001) contends, risk indices are arbitrarily labeled in such a way that risk gradients can be inverted to protection gradients because risk and protection occur on bipolar dimensions. That is, some interpretations of resilience suggest that protection and risk may be characterized as degrees of influence on a continuum of effects. On the contrary, others hold that although in some instances protection and risk can be thought of as opposite ends of the same continuum, that perspective may not always be entirely accurate (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). In further complication of the issue, it is known that protection and risk may include a kind of duality of nature; in one instance, a factor may be protective or risky, but, in another instance, that same factor may not be so (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). For example, Luthar (1991) found that high intelligence related to good school grades when stress levels were low. Conversely, when stress levels were high, intelligence did not seem to mitigate the effect of stress and grades were comparable to those of less intelligent classmates. It is difficult, therefore, to say whether protective or risk factors on their own forecast the occurrence of a particular outcome; the mere presence or absence of protection and risk do not individually suggest causality (Kraemer, Kazdin, Offord, & Kupfer, 2001). Even so, these factors are valuable in that they may serve as signals of the mechanisms that actually do predict causality (O'Connor & Rutter, 1996).

Similarly, these statements are pertinent to assumptions regarding levels of protection and risk. For example, research has not demonstrated that single protective or risk factors have a significant impact on an individual, which suggests that the effect of protection and risk varies from individual to individual (Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005; Masten,

2001). In addition, it is thought that factorial multiplicity (i.e., multiple protective or risk factors operating simultaneously) is what makes either protection or risk *potentially* significant, but not necessarily so (Luthar, 2007; Rutter, 2006, 2007). Potentiality is important because the simple existence or simultaneous occurrence of a number of factors does not appear to automatically drive an influence or, for that matter, an outcome. Instead, research into this area of resilience has revealed that it is the *mechanism* of dealing with circumstances emerging as either protective or risky that ultimately inhibits, maintains, or promotes resilience (Rutter, 2007).

Along these lines, Lazarus and colleagues have maintained that a person's subjective appraisal of protection and risk in his or her life determines resilience (Lazarus, DeLongis, Folkman, & Gruen, 1985). Nonetheless, others have theorized that protection and risk can be more objectively measured (Hobfoll, 1991). Regardless of the debate that resilience should be either subjectively or objectively measured, it appears that the construct cannot be considered as a fixed trait.

Resilience: Outcome or Process?

Is resilience ultimately an outcome or a process? Process-focused research aims to understand the mechanisms that mediate risk in order that an individual may adapt or develop successfully. Conversely, outcome-focused research aims to understand the end result or ultimate maintenance of functionality in spite of risk. As is evident from the mass of relevant literature, neither outcome nor process prevails as the dominant paradigm. Perhaps this is so because both approaches offer a unique perspective, methodology of measurement, and attention to a differing assortment of components within the construct (Olsson et al., 2003). Fundamentally, *process* models emphasize the exploration of what it is that people actually do in the course of meeting challenges, whereas *outcome* models emphasize the investigation of the level of resilience and/or protective and risk factors (Rutter, 2007).

Person-Environment Interaction

Another major conceptual feature that is often present in studies of resilience is that of interaction effects. The idea of interaction is largely based in early theories of self-evolution, namely involving person-object relations (Fairbairn, 1962). Fairbairn's and other relations theorists' work led to prevalent convictions in child psychology that personality develops not on its own but in the midst of person-environment exchanges. Similarly, Piaget noted that "life force …elaborates a distinction between the individual and the environment" (as cited in Kegan, 1982). While the resilience literatures do not presume that resilience is entirely reflective of personality or that it exists independent of it, researchers have consistently argued that risk factors become truly salient when the individual (usually speaking in terms of genes) and the environment interact (Hansson et al., 2008; Rutter 2006, 2008). In line with this thinking, one key component of resilience research therefore entails understanding how protection and risk factors interact to produce an effect. (See Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg Hetherington, & Bornstein (2000) for a contemporary discussion of the bidirectional nature of genetics and the environment.)

There is also consideration given to the idea that resilience is a product of other interactions as well, such as social interactions, social networks, and person-media interactions (Masten, 2007). In essence, the message from these discussions is that interaction rarely occurs across disconnected domains, and its resultant effects can be viewed as products of combinations of variables that vary across biological, cultural, environmental, genetic, psychological, and social conditions. For example, Bohman (1996) found that

criminality in adoptees in Sweden was most highly correlated when biological risk (caused by a biological parent with substance abuse issues) combined with risk from upbringing by the adoptive parents. When no risk was accounted for, 3% of adoptees exhibited criminality as an adult. When only risk from upbringing was accounted for, 6% of adoptees exhibited criminality as an adult. The number quadrupled to 12% with only biological risk, and criminality spiked to 40% when both biological and environmental risk were present. One of the main points taken from this and other research (Dumont, Widom, & Czaja, 2007) is that individual differences in history and current circumstances lead to dissimilar outcomes that result from multi-dimensional exchanges between an individual and his or her environment.

Resilience across the Lifespan

Although the groundwork for studying the construct of resilience was initially laid by the desire to understand and aid at-risk children (Werner & Smith, 1984), theories and studies on resilience are increasingly endeavoring to encompass a life-span perspective, thereby extending relevance to adults as well as young people (Bonanno, 2004; DiRago & Vaillant, 2007). Because most of the research has been conducted on younger populations, it is unsurprising that studies of older populations are rarer in the resilience literature (Sills, Cohan, & Stein, 2006). Nonetheless, adults, as well as children, are exposed to difficult life circumstances, but most do not develop symptoms of psychopathology (Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes, & Nelson, 1995). Findings of this type are important because, as Rutter (1996, p. 6) noted, the comprehension of adult prognosis and outcome has great potential to inform on the "nature and origins" of psychopathology.

If resilience can indeed be applied across the lifespan, it is logical to posit that there are also multiple pathways to overcoming adversity. This is supported by the enormous individual variation in response to similar circumstances and the equally enormous heterogeneity in outcomes that represent normative functioning (Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005; Rutter, 2007). More traditional studies on individuals exposed to and affected by trauma have focused on roads to recovery (McFarlane & Yehuda, 1996), and there has been little attention paid to subgroups of individuals who are exposed to potentially distressing events but do not subsequently develop incidences of prolonged and debilitating distress (Bonanno, 2004). Such an approach to understanding resilience by taking individual differences into account requires an unconventional perspective on standardized predictions of adjustment and outcome. As Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000a, p. 553) observe, resilience conceptually "encapsulates the view that adaptation can occur through *trajectories* that defy 'normative' expectations." It is essential to note that this statement may not necessarily emphasize the uniqueness of individuals who exhibit resilience but rather the common occurrence of resilience achieved through multifinality, or the variety of good results occurring from analogous initial conditions.

Summary

The conceptual aspects of resilience are complex, and investigation of the construct has occurred through a number of different approaches. Some research has focused on the settings that strengthen or weaken resilience, the roles of protective and risk factors, and the exchanges that occur between a person and his or her surroundings. Other research has examined the mechanisms and outcomes that enable resilience and the lifespan trajectories that may lead to good functioning. Studies of resilience are found across diverse areas of scientific inquiry, and the construct is the subject of much criticism, debate, and scrutiny.

Applying the Construct to the Context of Political Violence

The salience of the construct of resilience has been supported by findings of youth and children from a wide array of risk settings, including community-level violence, conduct problems, natural and human-made disaster, family discord, parental mental illness, substance abuse, and terrorism, among many others (Beardslee & Podorefsky, 1988; Bonanno, Rennicke, & Dekel, 2005; Cutuli, Chaplin, Gillham, Reivich, & Seligman, 2006; Luthar & D'Avanzo, 1999). Evidently, the extensive application of the construct in hundreds of dissimilar studies suggests resilience is potentially congruous with countless life scenarios.

One particularly challenging circumstance that confronts hundreds of thousands of young people is war or other forms of political violence. Given the severity of violence, destructiveness, and loss that young people experience in this context, it stands as a good test of the principle of resilience. The balance of this paper discusses the potential relevance of resilience to populations of youth experiencing political conflict.

The method of assessing the relevance of resilience to populations of conflict youth utilized in this paper is the analysis of empirical data reported by thousands of adolescents and young adults in Bosnia and Palestine. Specifically, items in the data sets were identified that appear to correspond to the short list of protective factors organized by Masten and Reed (2002) that was the product of the first wave of resilience research (see in Table 1). Frequencies of conflict youths' responses to these items were then inspected with the expectation that they would reveal high levels of positive functioning consistent with recent research on conflict youth (e.g., Annan et al., 2007, 2008; Barber, 2009). Findings are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

The Data

Barber (2008, p. 299) described the Adolescents and Political Violence Project as follows:

> The Adolescents and Political Violence Project has been an ever evolving multi-method, comparative study of experiences of adolescents with political conflict in two critical regions of the world: the Balkans and the Middle East. The project began in 1994 as a multi-phased study of Palestinian adolescents, that included: (1) an initial survey administered in 1994-1995 to a representative sample of 7,000 refugee families with adolescents in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip; (2) an immersive, ethnographic phase (1996-2000) that included an aggregate of 19 months of participation in and observation of the culture (primarily in Gaza) and formal interviews with several dozen Gazan youth who had spent at least their teen years during the first Intifada; and (3) a second survey administered in 1998 to a representative sample of 900 Gazan youth (using the same age criterion) that was designed to incorporate culturally-relevant insights gathered from the proceeding two phases of the project….The project then extended to compare the experiences of Bosnian youth, a logical contrast group given that both cultures are predominantly Muslim, both had experienced severe political conflict over many, successive years in the same decade, and both regions have had a history of political instability. I conducted interviews with several dozen Bosnian youth using the same age criterion (i.e., at least three of their teen years during the war with Serbia) and methodology (except without the ethnographic phase). These were followed by the administration in 2002 of the same survey that had been conducted in Gaza (translated into Bosnian, with some few changes in content to reflect key

differences in the nature of the conflicts) to a non-representative sample of 600 Bosnian youth who met the age criterion.

As became increasingly evident during the undertaking of the APVP, life goes on for individuals who experience hardship, even hardship as potentially debilitating as political conflict (Barber, 2009a). Others who have interest in researching the human ability to function normatively in war-like environments (e.g., Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina) support this observation as well (Cairns & Darby, 1998; Powell, Rosner, Butolla, Tedeschi, & Calhoun, 2003). The current article uses the APVP data only as it sheds light on indicators of good psychosocial functioning. That is, this is not an attempt to compartmentalize, compare, or characterize these youths' experiences while living amidst political violence (see Barber, 2008, and Barber & Schulterman, 2009, for such comparisons). Nor does this section discuss survey data that might highlight the role and impact of risk factors for the youth within these specific contexts. The goal is simply to assess the degree to which youth exposed to various and protracted political conflicts exhibit signs of healthy psychological and social functioning consistent with one area of resilience research—protective factors.

The range of themes from the data sets that were used here to represent resilience protective factors includes: civic and religious engagement, identity perception, quality of family and community life, interpersonal relationships, respect from others, and self-esteem. These various domains of functioning were further organized according to the following scheme: *within the child* (7 questions for each of the Gaza and Bosnia young adult surveys and 4 questions for the Palestine youth survey), *within the family* (4 questions for each of the Gaza and Bosnia young adult surveys and 7 questions for the Palestine youth survey), *within other relationships* (2 questions for each of the Gaza and Bosnia young adult surveys and 6 questions for the Palestine youth survey), and *within the community* (2 questions for each of the Gaza and Bosnia young adult surveys and questions for the Palestine youth survey). Table 2 lists the specific questionnaire items that fell under these themes. The table also shows the metric that participants responded to when reporting their perspectives on these items. Finally, the table reports the proportion of the samples that responded accordingly, by sex of participant.

Results

Protective Factors within the Child. The APVP asked several questions about the youths' perception of their selves, including feelings about competence, worth, maturity, making a difference, etc. As can be seen from the first panel of Table 2, the majority—often the large majority—of Palestinian and Bosnian young adults rated themselves high on such items. For example, percentages of male and female youth in both cultures who reported agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement about doing things as well as most people ranged from 75-98%. There were few exceptions where a majority of youth did not report positive functioning. One was Palestinian female (35%) and Bosnian male (23%) and female (9%) youth regarding whether they felt their efforts in the conflict were making a difference. Another was Palestinian female youth regarding whether they felt they were making history (45%). Overall, the pattern of findings indicates that even when referring to periods

Table 2: Proportions of Youth from the APVP's 1998 and 2001Surveys Who Endorsed Questions Consistent with Protective Factors Identified in the Resilience Literatures

Sample Questions	Metric	Gaza Young Adult Survey (1998)		Bosnia Young Adult Survey (2001)	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
Within the Child					
"I am able to do things as well as most people."	Percentage that agreed or strongly agreed	82	75	87	98
"I feel I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others."	Percentage that agreed or strongly agreed	62	51	83	97
"I felt I could make a real difference during the late conflict."	Percentage that agreed or strongly agreed	51	35	23	9
"I felt like I was helping make history during the late conflict."	Percentage that agreed or strongly agreed	69	45	68	61
"I take a positive attitude toward myself."	Percentage that agreed or strongly agreed	79	78	81	82
"The conflict has made me discover my identity as a person."	Percentage that agreed or strongly agreed	77	66	69	91
"The conflict has made me more mature."	Percentage that agreed or strongly agreed	57	62	85	97
Within the Family					
"How would you describe your family after the conflict?"	Percentage that marked about the same as, a little richer than, or a lot richer than most	82	87	86	87
"How often did you feel respect from your father after the conflict?"	Percentage that marked always or almost always	61	64	90	82
"How often did you feel respect from your mother after the conflict?"	Percentage that marked always or almost always	65	67	93	83
"How often did you have arguments with your parents after the conflict?"	Percentage that marked never or less than once per month	65	59	56	60
Within Family and Other Relationships					
"How often did you feel respect from your friends after the conflict?"	Percentage that marked always or almost always	75	70	87	80
"I ask questions of adults when I need advice?"	Percentage that marked often or very often	68	73	47	61
Within the Community					
"How do you feel about your neighborhood as a place to live?"	Percentage that marked average, good, or excellent	71	81	95	96
"The conflict has made me more respected by my community."	Percentage that agreed or strongly agreed	81	64	63	83

of their life that were full of conflict and danger, the majority of youth reported personal qualities reflective of the type of protective factors discussed in the literatures on resilience.

Protective Factors within the Family. The APVP asked several questions about the youths' perceptions of their families, including feelings about relationships with their parents, parental expectations, family economic well-being, family closeness, etc. As can be seen from Table 3, the large majority of Palestinian youth indicated positive perceptions of their families on these measures. For example, the percentages of male and female youth who reported having good or very good relationships with their mothers ranged from 75-80%. The one exception where a majority of youth did not report positive family functioning was Palestinian female youth (45%) regarding whether they felt their father made them feel better when talking over worries together. Overall, the pattern of findings shows that even when referring to times that were very stressful, the majority of youth reported family qualities reflective of the type of protective factors discussed in the literatures on resilience.

Protective Factors within Other Relationships. The APVP asked several questions about the youths' perceptions of their relationships with others, including perceptions of friends' sociability, respect from friends and religious leaders, etc. As can be seen from Table 2, the majority of both male and female youth reported positive perceptions of their relationships with others. For example, percentages of male and female youth from both Bosnia and Palestine who reported always or almost always having their friends' respect ranged from 70-87%. One exception was Bosnian male youth who reported on whether they asked questions of adults (47%). Overall, the pattern of findings indicates that the majority of youth reported relationship qualities reflective of the type of protective factors explored in the literatures on resilience.

Protective Factors within the Community. The APVP asked several questions about youths' perceptions of the communities in which they lived, including neighborhood quality, accord between neighbors, respect by the community, etc. As can be seen from Tables 2 and 3, the majority of both male and female youth reported positive perceptions of their communities. For example, when asked how they felt about their neighborhood as a place to live, 95% of Bosnian males and 96% of Bosnian females reported their neighborhood quality to be average or above average. The one exception where a majority of youth did not report positive perceptions of their communities was Palestinian male and female youth who reported hearing about violent arguments between neighbors (37% for males and 40% for females indicating "never"). Overall, the pattern of findings shows that the majority of youth reported community qualities reflective of the type of protective factors discussed in the literatures on resilience.

Summary

The APVP survey segments used to evaluate good psychosocial functioning among youth in zones affected by political conflict aligned categorically with subsets of common protective factors supposed to predict psychosocial resilience in young people. Further, given that the proportions were by and large highly indicative of positive functioning within each subset, it is evident the survey data on good psychosocial functioning coincides with the short list of protective factors. In this instance, one of the basic *theoretical* foundations of resilience—protective factors—can, according to this particular data in these three contexts, apply to young people in political conflict as it has been shown to apply to young people in other difficult circumstances.

Table 3: Proportions of Youth from the APVP's 1994-1995 Survey Who Endorsed Questions Consistent with Protective Factors Identified in the Resilience Literatures

Sample Questions	Metric	Palestine Youth Survey (1994-1995)	
		Male	Female
Within the Child			
"I am able to do things as well as most people."	Percentage that agreed or strongly agreed	73	72
"I take a positive attitude toward myself."	Percentage that agreed or strongly agreed	67	71
"How religious do you consider yourself to be?"	Percentage that marked moderately, very, or extremely religious	79	86
"Which of the following best describe your average grades?"	Percentage that marked A, B, or C	59	59
Within the Family			
"Compared to other families you know, how well off do you think your family is?"	Percentage that marked about the same as, a little richer than, or a lot richer than most	76	77
"During the past 30 days, how often did one of your parents check to see whether your homework was done?"	Percentage that marked sometimes or often.	76	67
"How far do your parents expect you to go in school?"	Percentage that marked secondary school or higher	68	71
"How would you rate your relationship with your mother/father?"	Percentage that marked good or very good	80/69	75/63
"My mother/father is a person who gives me a lot of care and attention."	Percentage that marked exactly like mother/father	69/67	70/61
"My mother/father is a person who makes me feel better when talking over worries with her/him."	Percentage that marked exactly like mother/father	71/60	70/45
"My mother/father is a person who makes me feel like the most important person in her/his life."	Percentage that marked exactly like mother/father	51/49	37/36
Within Family or Other Relationships			
"How many close friends do you have?"	Percentage that marked having 2 or more	93	90
"How many of your friends purposely damage or destroy property?"	Percentage that marked none	75	88
"How many of your friends steal or try to steal things of value?"	Percentage that marked none	68	83
"How many of your friends use alcoholic beverages, beer, wine, hard liquor?"	Percentage that marked none	90	96
"How much does the principal and assistant principal care about you as a person?"	Percentage that marked none	53	51
"Religious leaders care about me a lot as a person."	Percentage that marked care a lot	51	49
Within the Community			
"How do you feel about your neighborhood as a place to live?"	Percentage that marked average, good, or excellent	88	90
"In your neighborhood, how often during the past few months have you heard of a fight in which a weapon was used?"	Percentage that marked never	55	67
"In your neighborhood, how often during the past few months have you heard of youth gang conflicts?"	Percentage that marked never	62	71
"In your neighborhood, how often during the past few months have you heard violent arguments between neighbors?"	Percentage that marked never	37	40

Overall Summary

This article has attempted to provide a review of the construct of resilience and present an assessment of the construct in the context of political violence. Resilience is defined as good functioning despite the presence of adversity. The first section of the article examined the history, conceptualization, and significance of the construct within the scientific community. The construct has been evolving for nearly fifty years, and its theoretical applications are numerous and complex. The theory of resilience involves the matter of central terminology, the roles of risk and protective factors, the aspects of process and outcome, the relationship between a person and his or her environment, and the issues of development and trajectory.

The second section of this article discussed whether the construct is applicable to the context of political violence. This context was selected because hundreds of thousands of young people across the world are caught in the midst of societies experiencing political violence, and, as a result, they often face challenging life circumstances. This paper aimed to determine the relevance of the construct to this particular context by comparing an authoritative short list of protective factors within the resilience literature to data collected from youth and young adults living in the conflict-affected regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Gaza and the West Bank, Palestine. The central findings from the empirical analyses suggest that the majority proportions of individuals in these contexts reported levels of psychosocial functioning consistent with principles identified in resilience theory.

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