Original contributions

Community asset mapping for violence prevention: A comparison of views in Erijaville, South Africa and Memphis, USA

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ABSTRACT

In the context of addressing challenges relating to ongoing interpersonal violence, this article conducts a comparative analysis of findings from a community asset mapping process drawing responses from 100 community participants across the two sites of Erijaville, South Africa and Memphis, Tennessee in the USA. Specifically, we describe the similarities and differences across sites regarding community assets linked to safety and peace promotion, with a particular emphasis on tangible and intangible factors relevant to the promotion of safety and peace. The findings reveal a major emphasis on ‘intangible’ factors that relate to the promotion of safety

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and peace, including personal values and behaviour (such as love, compassion and prayer), family relationships (such as family socialisation, care and supervision, role modelling, and peer guidance), and community connectedness (including community hope and trust, and the development of ethical leadership). The findings suggest that religious assets and spiritual capacity constitute important resources, which should be more intentionally mobilised and enhanced to promote safety and peace. This constitutes an important challenge in relation to violence prevention in both South Africa and the USA.

**Keywords:** community-based participatory research, community asset mapping, interpersonal violence, violence prevention, positive forms of masculinity, peace and safety, religious assets, spiritual capacity.

**INTRODUCTION**

This article shares findings from a cross-site community asset mapping project conducted in South Africa and the United States of America (USA), where the focus was on identifying community and religious assets that contribute to peace and safety, particularly with regard to the promotion of positive forms of masculinity. The main research question guiding the study was: “How can the mobilisation of community assets, with a particular focus on spiritual capacity and religious assets, promote safety and peace in a low-income community in South Africa and in the USA, particularly through the promotion of positive forms of masculinity?” One key objective of this study was to identify factors that promote community safety and peace, the focus for this discussion.

The SCRATCHMAPS² project, located in the Violence, Injury and Peace Research Unit (VIPRU) of the South African Medical Research Council and University of South Africa, arose from a recognition of the high levels of violence in South Africa and Memphis and the over-representation of males as both perpetrators and victims of violence (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002; Lazarus, Tonsing, Ratele, & Van Niekerk, 2011; Seedat, Van Niekerk, Jewkes, Suffla, & Ratele, 2009), and the relatively unexplored area of religious assets and spiritual capacity for addressing violence and promoting peace (ARHAP, 2006). Responses to this violence take many forms, including various violence prevention and safety and peace promotion initiatives.

The focus on safety and peace promotion in this study is directly linked to violence prevention, and therefore includes the mitigation of both direct or episodic violence and structural violence. Our theoretical approach to safety and peace promotion draws on

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² SCRATCHMAPS: Spiritual Capacity and Religious Assets for Transforming Community Health by Mobilising Males for Peace and Safety

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theories of peacebuilding, which emphasise the promotion of harmony (which includes various approaches to conflict management, resolution and transformation) and equity to promote social justice (Christie et al., 2014). This includes embracing and promoting values, attitudes and behaviours that reject violence and actively promote peace (Britto, Gordon, et al., 2014).

Research conducted and instruments developed in this area have been pursued at a global level (e.g., World Health Organization’s Safe Communities, 1999) and there is some evidence that researchers have been involved in developing indicators for community safety and/or peace in various contexts (e.g., Holtmann, 2010; Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999; Whitzman, 2008; Whitzman & Zhang, 2006). This includes other projects pursued within the umbrella of VIPRU’s research agenda, including a photovoice project implemented in various countries in Africa (e.g., Suffla, Kaminer, & Bawa, 2012).

Following on the positive approach evident in research focusing on safety and peace promotion, and in order to pursue SCRATCHMAPS’ objective to identify factors that promote safety and peace, an asset-based approach was adopted in this study. Community development practitioners and researchers recognise that needs assessments are important, but there is growing recognition that it is important to focus on assets to move beyond a deficit mentality (Kramer, Amos, Lazarus, & Seedat, 2012; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Lazarus et al., 2014). Community asset mapping is one strategy that focuses on helping communities to identify and build on their strengths, resources, and capabilities (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). Characteristics of an assets approach include promoting community development, focusing on strengths and human capabilities, recognising that important assets lie in networks and relationships, focusing on making community assets visible for the community (and relevant decision-makers), promoting leadership engagement for the purposes of supporting action, adopting a participatory inquiry approach, and creating new theoretical understandings (see Kramer, Seedat, Lazarus, & Suffla, 2011). A focus on assets provides an effective strategy to foster participation, agency, and inclusivity (via inviting participants into the process who may otherwise be marginalised or ‘invisible’ to more powerful stakeholders), and to reconceptualise or reframe communities as being resourceful and resilient rather than contexts of problems. Community assessments can include an evaluation of various aspects of community life, including the development of lists of strengths that already exist in a particular community, noting identified needs, and identifying what should need to happen in order to promote change and development.

Community asset mapping, as a strategy that is often used to pursue the abovementioned objectives, has been developed to focus specifically on religious and spiritual assets in communities across Africa and the USA (See IRHAP website: www.irhap.uct.ac.za), and was utilised in the cross-site workshops presented in this paper. Drawing on the work of...
the African Religious Health Assets Programme (ARHAP), now renamed the International Religious Health Assets Programme or IRHAP (2006; see also De Gruchy et al., 2007, 2011; Cochrane, Schmid, & Cutts, 2011) religious assets refer to assets (capabilities, skills, resources, links, associations, organisations and institutions) located in or held by a religious entity that can be leveraged for the purposes of development or public health. The most obvious religious assets are those that are ‘tangible’, such as facilities and personnel, care or service, and material support or curative interventions, most of which appear identical to secular entities. Underlying this tangible level, however, are the volitional, motivational and mobilising capacities that are rooted in vital affective, symbolic and relational dimensions of religious faith, belief, behaviour and ties. Local knowledge, access, reach, participation, trust, hope, resilience and accompaniment are just some of what we call ‘intangible’ religious health assets (De Gruchy et al., 2007; Cochrane et al., 2015).

The concept of spiritual capacity, arising specifically out of this research project, is described more fully elsewhere (Cochrane et al., 2015; Lazarus, Cochrane, Taliep, Simmons, & Seedat, 2015). In the project’s Conceptual Position Paper (Cochrane et al., 2015), ‘spiritual capacity’ is defined in terms of the explicitly human capacity of creative freedom, that is, our extraordinary ability, to a degree not true of any other creature to our knowledge, to use symbol systems to understand phenomena in nature (including our social experience) so as to be able to imagine something that does not yet exist and bring it into being; thus, to change or alter the world in ways that could never happen otherwise. Intrinsically good (because we would not be human without it) but nonetheless amoral (because it can be turned to either good or evil actions), how we use or act out of it will be significantly determined by our orientation towards ourselves, others and the world. In short, it places before us an unavoidable and profound moral responsibility for why we do what we do (we are the only creatures, as far as we know, who ask ourselves: ‘ought’ we to do something or not?).

A literature review on religion and violence prevention conducted within the SCRATCHMAPS project (Amos, 2010) revealed that religion and spirituality can act as positive resources. These resources can be and have been mobilised to promote prosocial values and norms, and cultivate a sense of hope and purpose through religious and community activities, including rituals and ceremonies, provision of safe spaces, pastoral counselling, and the facilitation of dialogue. The positive role of religions, faith and spirituality in peace promotion has also been highlighted by others (Britto, Salah, et al., 2014).

In the sections below, we outline the methodology pursued in this study and then provide a summary of the cross-site findings from multiple community asset mapping workshops conducted in the Western Cape and Memphis sites during 2012. As mentioned earlier, these workshops focused on identifying local religious assets and spiritual capacity relating
to safety and peace, with a particular focus on the promotion of positive forms of masculinity to prevent violence. In our discussion and conclusion, we briefly discuss key issues arising from the study, and share potential implications of the findings, specifically as these relate to attempts to develop interventions that mobilise spiritual capacity and religious assets to create safety and peace at community level.

METHOD
RESEARCH APPROACH

In order to pursue the research aims and objectives outlined above, the SCRATCHMAPS project was initiated. An early history of the five-year collaborative, cross-site SCRATCHMAPS research project was described previously in this journal (2009). The overall objectives of this participatory research were (1) to develop conceptual and theoretical frameworks to understand the possible mediating influences of spiritual capacity and religious assets in the promotion of safety and peace, particularly as it relates to the promotion of positive or generative forms of masculinity; (2) to identify spiritual capacity and religious assets in a local community, and to understand the processes and dynamics by which they work; (3) to develop, implement and evaluate an intervention that mobilises spiritual capacity and religious assets to promote generative forms of masculinity to create safety and peace; and (4) to contribute to the knowledge base and practical understanding of community engagement as expressed through a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach. This paper focuses primarily on the second objective, i.e. identifying and mobilising spiritual and community assets to promote safety and peace via a community asset mapping process pursued in a community in South Africa and in the USA.

The SCRATCHMAPS research methodology was guided by a critical and participatory meta-theoretical perspective, enacted through the values and principles of a CBPR approach: The ‘community’ is the unit of focus; community engagement occurs at all levels of the research process; the research is relevant to the community; it builds on the strengths and resources of the community; there is a commitment to action research, which emphasises a dynamic relationship between theory and practice; it is based on a partnership between the research institutions and community members; it promotes co-learning and mutual benefits, and sharing findings and knowledge (including indigenous knowledge) with all relevant stakeholders; and it is a long-term process, with commitment to ownership and sustainability (Israel, Eng, Schulz, & Parker, 2005; Lazarus, Duran, Caldwell, & Bulbulia, 2012; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). ‘Researcher’ in this context refers to both academic and locally situated researchers, a critical aspect of community asset mapping (De Gruchy, Cochrane, Olivier, & Matimelo, 2011).
RESEARCH SITES

The *South African research site, Erijaville*, formerly known as Blikkiesdorp (‘Tin Town’), is situated in the Western Cape province of South Africa. There are about 164 houses and about twice as many backyard dwellings within this small community. The bulk of residents are Afrikaans speaking, previously categorised as ‘Coloured’ by the apartheid regime, and the majority adhere to the Christian faith. Previous general population estimates indicate that about half of the population is male and more than half of the residents are younger than forty years of age. Statistics also show a high percentage of low to no educational levels, and almost half of the population earning less than R1 000 (roughly $74 USD) per month. Although homicide is limited in this neighbourhood, a high level of non-fatal injury occurs through violence, with a particular emphasis on domestic violence (Isobell & Lazarus, 2014a, 2014b).

The *USA site in Memphis, Tennessee* included two large apartment blocks in South Memphis (Peppertree and Bent Tree). The approximately 3000 residents of these blocks are of African-American descent (98%), Christian faith, and were selected for this study due to already existing faith community partnerships with clergy and local ministries. The 2013 population estimates (US Census Bureau) of the zip code in which these two apartment blocks are located indicate that, of the total 48169 residents, 46.1% are male, with a median age of 36.3 years. Fewer than 25% of residents complete a secondary education and the median household income is $2589 (USD) per month, with 21.9% unemployment and 30.5% of the population living under the poverty level.

COMMUNITY ASSET MAPPING METHODOLOGY

During the early phases of the SCRATCHMAPS research process, community asset mapping was used to help identify and mobilise community assets to promote safety and peace, and to prepare for the development, implementation and evaluation of a violence prevention intervention. Community asset mapping is a particular methodology employed for community assessment and development purposes (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). The main objective of this approach is to focus on human capacities and assets (particularly spiritual and religious strengths and resources), recognising that important assets lie in networks and relationships, and that it is important to make these community assets visible for the community and relevant decision-makers for the purposes of taking action. Drawing on the work of IRHAP, we focused on making both tangible and intangible religious assets visible.

The asset mapping methodology and toolset were designed by the collaborative research team for this SCRATCHMAPS process, drawing on prior community asset mapping...
experiences within the team. The process involved the redesign of an existing religious health asset mapping toolset established by IRHAP (see De Gruchy et al., 2007; De Gruchy et al., 2011). Several varieties of this mapping toolset have been developed and practised in Africa and the USA (for more on these varieties, see ARHAP 2006; Blevins, Thurman, Kiser, & Beres, 2012; Cutts, 2011; Olivier, Cochrane, & De Gruchy, 2012). The main redesign aspect for this version was a focus on identifying factors that promote safety and peace (rather than on ‘health’ more broadly speaking). It should be noted that the concepts of safety and peace were deliberately used together rather as distinctive notions, with the main focus being on their links to violence prevention. We recognise that distinguishing these concepts would be appropriate for certain research purposes but also recognise that, in the context of violence prevention, they are often used interchangeably in the literature, and supported in this study itself. The redesign of the mapping toolset also included a topical refocusing of some of the exercises onto issues relating to positive forms of masculinity – to better suit the SCRATCHMAPS focus. Community asset mapping manuals were developed to guide the workshop facilitators and to ensure cross-site consistency between the South African and USA sites (Cutts, Olivier, Lazarus, Cochrane, & Taliep, 2012; Olivier, Cutts, Lazarus, Cochrane, & Taliep, 2012). The main aspect of the mapping approach that preserved consistency between the sites, in spite of the obvious contextual differences in the USA and South Africa, was the logical flow within the mapping workshops (see Table 1.)

**Table 1: Logical flow of community asset mapping workshops**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise 1: Contextual considerations (community mapping)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The exercises begin with a deliberate focus on context. EXERCISE 1 therefore starts with participants drawing community maps and identifying the key social entities and facilities in their community, as well as key contextual considerations.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Exercise 2: Peace and safety within the community context</th>
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<td>Having engaged in conversation about context, participants are now asked in EXERCISE 2 to identify the key factors that both (i) contribute to and (ii) undermine peace and safety in the community. These two sets of factors are then integrated in a participatory discussion to create a contextual, group-identified peace and safety index. This gives us a picture of what the key peace and safety issues in the community are perceived to be.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Exercise 3: The relative contribution of community assets to peace and safety</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXERCISE 3 then combines some of the key community assets (public facilities and programmes, including religious entities) identified in the maps of EXERCISE 1, with key factors contributing to peace and safety from EXERCISE 2, to create a community asset/peace and safety ranking matrix. This enables participants to rank the relative contribution of community facilities to the group-identified factors contributing to safety and peace.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Exercise 4: Religious assets and masculinity within the community context</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXERCISE 4 then focuses on religious assets, with further probes on masculinity. The facilitator returns to community assets identified in EXERCISE 3 during discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Exercise 5: Local action</th>
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<tr>
<td>There is a guided discussion on spiritual capacity and positive forms of masculinity, which then moves towards an integrated identification of characteristics of local examples promoting positive forms of masculinity, and peace and safety. Opportunities for further local action and intervention are then identified.</td>
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DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

In both sites the asset mapping process began with transect walks in the communities, and researchers met with local community advisors before the community asset mapping workshops were conducted. In most cases, these workshops were conducted over a single day, usually running from 09:00 to 14:00 – with a facilitation team consisting of at least three people. The workshops, which included a number of interactive exercises, followed the asset mapping logic outlined in Table 1.

In Erijaville, three community asset mapping workshops were conducted in 2012, in which 74 community members participated. This was followed by a service providers’ workshop which included 18 service provider representatives from 15 different sectors, and thereafter an action planning workshop that included 41 community members and service providers combined. Most of the community participants in the first three workshops were between 36 to 55 years old and almost equally spread in terms of gender (36 males and 38 females). They were predominantly Afrikaans speaking, and mostly from Christian backgrounds. Local academic and 10 community researchers, employed as the local SCRATCHMAPS research team in this context, conducted the asset mapping workshops.

In Memphis, two community workshops were conducted with a total of 26 participants. The initial workshop held in 2012 consisted of 10 adult participants: seven females and three males, ages ranging from 23 to 66 years. In the second workshop, targeting youth, 16 individuals participated (14 males and two females) with ages ranging from 13 to 18 years. The Memphis asset mapping was conducted by six local academic staff from the hospital system and four community members.

DATA ANALYSIS

Workshop data from each site were captured through the workshop exercises, and through researcher note-taking during the processes. These data sets, which were captured and discussed in separate research reports (Cutts & Gunderson, 2013; Lazarus et al., 2014), were both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Numerous scribes captured the workshop conversations and these reports were compiled and reviewed by both academic and community researchers. Descriptive statistics were used to provide a demographic profile of research participants present at the community asset mapping workshops. Combined frequency distributions were used to arrange the values of a quantity of different variables identified on (a) factors that act against safety and peace, and (b) factors and local community assets that promote safety and peace. Other methods used included: composite analyses of community workshop maps (i.e., consensus reviews from the combined academic and community research teams), particularly focusing on safe and unsafe spaces; service providers Time-Line and Time-Trends analyses; the mapping of services provided in the...
local community; the identification of relationships between service providers – mapped on spidergrams; brainstorming lists outlining suggestions for action – from both community members and service providers; and qualitative thematic content analysis of community members’ views on how religion and spirituality contribute to safety and peace and link with masculinity. The latter content analyses followed the traditional steps of coding and categorising, usually pursued within thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with inter-coder consensus being obtained from both academic and community researchers. The overall categories of ‘intangible factors’ and ‘tangible factors’, drawing on previous work of IRHAP, were used to summarise the findings within and across sites.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical clearance for this project was formally pursued and received through the University of South Africa. In addition to the formal university process, ethics agreements were developed and signed by both academic and community partners. The formal and community ethics documentation covered all key aspects of research, including various principles relating to providing protection (e.g., informed consent, respect for anonymity, voluntary participation, and risk management), as well as the promotion of beneficence, with an emphasis on the benefit of this research for both communities. The ethics agreement placed a major emphasis on the commitment to a participatory and empowering process, central to the principles of community-engaged research.

FINDINGS

When viewing the findings from this study, it should be noted that the data provided below constitutes the synthesised views of members from the two communities concerned and thus constitutes the ‘grounded theory’ contribution to our understandings of safety and peace promotion. In the final sections of this paper we examine how these understandings link to the theoretical framework used to guide the study, as summarised above. With the focus on identifying factors that promote community safety and peace, the findings from both sites initially centred on identifying safe and unsafe spaces through community map creations. This was followed by the identification of tangible and intangible community assets or factors, including religious and spiritual resources that promote peace and safety. Because of the specific focus of the project, factors relating to positive forms of masculinity and mobilising males for peace and safety were also identified and highlighted.

IDENTIFICATION OF SAFE AND UNSAFE PLACES

Participants in the Erijaville workshops drew community maps which represented pictures of their community, and their views of areas that were considered safe or unsafe. Analysis of these maps revealed that churches were linked to safety by many workshop participants.
Other key structures or groups identified as creating safety in the community included: mobile shops (which function as a communal gathering space); the sports field or park; the existence of a soup kitchen, run by one community member; contributions by some specific people and organisations in the community; and the presence and value of elders in the community, who were considered to be assets in the community of Erijaville.

‘Unsafe spaces’ identified within Erijaville during these workshops included drug hotspots, gambling hotspots, shebeens (informal liquor shops), the soccer field/park, and garbage dumps. The presence of people ‘loitering’ around the streets was also considered to be an unsafe characteristic of the community. Some members referred to these groups of young men as ‘gangs’, but this perception was challenged in several workshops – suggesting contested perceptions about what constitutes ‘gangsterism’. Lastly, the lack of adequate community infrastructure was linked to unsafety in Erijaville, including a lack of lighting and good streets, garbage dumping, and generally a lack of safe spaces for extramural activities (for all ages, but youth in particular).

The community asset mapping process in Memphis also highlighted many areas deemed to be safe and unsafe. Schools were generally named as safe, as were retail stores, daycare centres for children, churches and health/dialysis centres. Participants reported:

“Daycares have children; where children are, people won’t go after the kids. It is safer because there is a baby present. Most families have babies, or you were a baby, or you know someone who has a baby.” And, “Having a safe place (a church or sanctuary) to go will provide people with a safe place to go and with people to talk to.”

Petrol stations and the apartment complexes were deemed unsafe. Time of day also factored into ratings of safety, for example, participants felt that the park was safe during the day, but unsafe at night, when prostitution, drug dealing and gang violence occurred there. Many participants noted that there was a mix of “good or safe places” and “bad or unsafe places” in each area. One participant noted that “It’s not really the place, but the community – the people – that determine the level of safety.”

FACTORS THAT PROMOTE SAFETY AND PEACE

Erijaville participants were asked to identify various factors that promote and act against peace and safety within their community or potential assets and risks. Factors that act against peace and safety were: drugs, poverty, unemployment, violence and crime, lack of amenities, broken families, lack of education and a lack of values (especially respect). Thus any action that addresses these issues would promote safety and peace. Participants noted about drugs, “Reach out to deal with the curse [of drugs] because change comes if we take
Specific factors contributing to safety and peace included: community cohesion (respect/love/working together/unity), employment, police and neighbourhood watch, churches, religion and spirituality, sport, education, housing and amenities.

Factors identified as acting against peace and safety in Memphis included gangs, guns, violence and crime, ignorance, lack of control, powerlessness, helplessness, poverty, drugs and alcohol, lack of knowledge and education, and unemployment. Memphis participants also identified tangible factors that promote peace and safety within the community, including having adequate money (and/or employment), strong leadership, laws, police enforcement, sports, education (formal and skills training), adequate living conditions/environment, being connected, and personal responsibility. For example, with regard to resources or finances, participants reported,

“Money leads to prostitution, gang violence and robbery; if people had money, they wouldn’t need to prostitute or rob people. Money is needed for food, supplies, and other essential things.”

Participants also reported, in terms of safety and educational benefits,

“Libraries offer books and knowledge. People learn things, and they have a sense of something better. Reading a book will offer options [such as] moving out to something better. This knowledge gives people a sense of something better.” Also, “Having an education is important because education is the key to getting away from the hood, away from poverty, and away from a bad situation.”

Lastly, a direct link was drawn between gang activity and ending violence:

“Stopping gangs and taking a stand against violence … will help. During recruitment, gangs will try to pull you in using violence. Stopping gangs will stop violence.”

Religion, faith and spirituality were seen as intangible factors contributing to peace and safety in Memphis insofar as they uplift the community, assist people in feeling connected, give community members a safe place to go, instil hope, and create a sense of respect and responsibility. For example, with regard to how churches instil hope and the interaction of faith and community uplifting, participants reported,

“Hope gives people something to look into the future and look forward to. It offers a sense of motivation. Churches give a sense of hope. People respect church … Faith lifts up the community and uplifts the community.”
Community connection, trust, faith and love were also cited:

Connecting with community, which increases trust – “If you’re connecting with someone, you don’t want to hurt someone in that connection. You feel the connection.”

Also, participants noted the ways in which gangs provide love in lieu of families:

“Kids often turn to drugs and gang violence because they aren’t loved. They go to gangs because they feel loved or connected in those areas.”

Positive values, alternate role models and promoting morals and values were seen as the anecdote to this role for gangs:

“Positive things for youth to do to keep them out of trouble – youth will look in the other direction instead of joining gangs.”

Also,

“Morals and values make a difference. Nothing will stop people from committing crimes and bringing violence, but morals and values can stop them.”

Tables 2 and 3 summarise tangible and intangible factors, respectively, named by participants in both sites.

**Table 2:** Tangible factors contributing to peace and safety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Erijaville</th>
<th>Memphis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Environment</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. Environment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees</td>
<td>Safe and quality housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime and violence-free</td>
<td>No gang activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of women and child abuse/domestic violence</td>
<td>Drug-free environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug-free environment</td>
<td>Crime and violence-free areas (contingent on time of day)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safe places for children to play</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community and street cleanliness</td>
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<tr>
<td>No gambling spots</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2. Service delivery</strong></td>
<td><strong>2. Service delivery</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police and neighbourhood watch working with community</td>
<td>Police and Fire Department working with community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal education</td>
<td>Mentoring for children and adults</td>
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### Table 3: Intangible factors that promote peace and safety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Erijaville</th>
<th>Memphis</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Personal aspects</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. Personal aspects</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morals</td>
<td>Morals and values</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive values</td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning good things</td>
<td>Prayer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Goals and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer and meditation</td>
<td>Sense of motivation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-help</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2. Community connectedness</strong></td>
<td><strong>2. Community connectedness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community cohesion</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working together</td>
<td>Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing together</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Unity</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Healing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive mindset</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership (strong community leaders)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taking responsibility</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No police corruption</td>
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</table>
Comparing the findings from the two sites, Erijaville workshop participants named environment (safe parks), structures (churches), service delivery (access to healthcare) and role models as key in terms of tangible factors that promote peace and safety. Memphis participants also focused on safe structures such as churches and childcare centres, but more emphasis was placed on service delivery factors, for example, having adequate financial resources, education, adequate criminal justice, access to healthcare and childcare, and combating gang violence and crime.

Both Erijaville and Memphis participants highlighted several intangible factors that were seen to contribute to community peace and safety. Erijaville participants focused on personal aspects (e.g., respect, prayer and meditation), family relationships (e.g., family cohesion and care), and community connectedness (e.g., trust and healing). Participants in Memphis focused more heavily on factors that centred on personal aspects (e.g., hope, compassion, love, morals and values, setting positive goals), with fewer responses focused on connectedness, trust-building and positive influences. Memphis participants emphasised keeping youth from engaging in gangs, as these often function as an alternate to a family connection.

FACTORS THAT RELATE MASCULINITY TO PEACE AND SAFETY

An additional focus of the community asset mapping workshops in both sites was to identify factors that relate to masculinity in relation to promoting safety and peace.

In Erijaville, a common understanding is that socialisation, particularly at home, plays a central role in promoting either positive or negative forms of masculinity. It was stressed that all social structures that create norms and promote values are interrogated in relation to whether or not their ‘messages’ are positive in relation to views of manhood. This includes the family, but it also includes the schools, churches, other faith-based organisations, and the media at large. Some participants recommended that churches should reach out more to the community, even if they are of different denominations:
“They should go to households to help where needed … They need to be seen more in the community … Churches make people feel safe … change people’s lives and help people.”

One interesting finding from the Erijaville workshops relates to the suggestion that a ‘reversal of roles’ be explored between men and women, which some believe would help to address the negative effects of unemployment for men. Here it was suggested that men should not be expected to always be the breadwinners, and should be valued and supported when doing other voluntary or family work that supports both family and community development. A silent reality is that

“Many women work and men stay at home and look after the children (reversed roles) … There is a need to redefine work and family roles…. Roles and responsibilities of men and women should be looked at… Men can help with chores; cleaning the house etcetera … This will help everyone to see fatherhood in a positive way”.

The Erijaville discussions strongly emphasised the importance of fathers in their families and in the community. Participants noted,

“Fatherhood and responsibilities that go hand in hand with being a father are important to being a ‘good man’. My father … he taught me how to look for a good man.”

As many of the families do not have a present father, this raises a number of challenges. It was noted, however, that even if one does not have a ‘blood’ father, other male members of the community can act as positive father-figure role models. This was highlighted by one participant, who shared,

“Sometimes we learn from the street, choosing role models […] this includes brothers and religious leaders, and grandfathers …] I learned from my grandfather … to never give up.”

In fact, on many occasions during the workshops, members stressed that men and women should ‘parent’ all the children in the community, irrespective of whether or not they were ‘their own’.

Numerous factors were linked to negative, violent forms of masculinity in these discussions. These included reacting out of emotional ‘defense’, operating out of patriarchal norms and values, and abusing others under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Conversely, a number
of attributes were identified as being central to a ‘positive masculinity’. This included respect (a central theme running through all the findings), as noted by this participant,

“A good man has respect”, and, “A good man respects himself first by looking after himself, and then his family”… “They must have respect for women.”

Additionally, participants cited a sense of responsibility:

“Fatherhood and responsibilities that go hand in hand with being a father are important to being a ‘good man’.”

Final factors included being hard working, being a good father: It was seen as important for the man “to raise your children along with your wife” … to help “take care of your children”, being a good role model, and having work (being employed), as highlighted in this comment, “Lord said your job is to work for your wife.”

In Memphis, similar trends emerged. In an initial discussion about traditional negative views of masculinity, participants noted that “Men are sometimes viewed as having to be aggressive, to prove their manhood – to prove that they are a real man.” Participants then shifted focus (as in Erijaville), seeing taking on the ‘head of household’ role as a positive sign of masculinity, arguing that

“Men are often tasked with paying the bills and being responsible; men offer protection; in a family, significant others want a man to be there to take care of them; in positive masculinity, men are responsible.”

Erijaville and Memphis discussions held with community members, religious leaders and service providers qualitatively illustrate that a great deal of emphasis is placed on a man’s ability to provide for a household, which requires financial stability and is linked to a particular way of dressing and representing oneself as a man. A number of characteristics linked to positive manifestations of masculinity were also linked to spiritual capacity and religious assets in the promotion of peace and safety, especially regarding the need to mentor and provide positive role models for young people while being able to overcome potentially divisive differences. Similar to criteria that identify a ‘real man’, participants also felt that women have specified roles within relationships and society, believing that scripts for gender roles are acquired through contact with older males and females, in families and more widely.
Role reversals suggested by Erijaville participants also appeared in Memphis, where participants felt that men can fulfil the role of positive masculinity through hands-on parenting: “Leading by example, thinking about and helping to take care of the baby and the family.” A strong focus on family or parenting as a value is also present, even when the question was about masculinity per se. For example, Memphis participants said that “…having better role models, patience, presence and parenting from both fathers and mothers,” would be a way that positive masculinity could promote peace and safety. Likewise, when asked about ways to promote positive forms of masculinity, Memphis respondents pointed to the role of broader support systems: “Build relationships, protect children and be more aware of the neighbourhood, take responsibility, and build a system of support.”

MOBILISING SPIRITUAL CAPACITY AND RELIGIOUS ASSETS TO PROMOTE POSITIVE FORMS OF MASCULINITY TO CREATE PEACE AND SAFETY

An overarching goal of the workshops was to investigate whether and how spiritual capacity and religious assets could be mobilised to promote positive forms of masculinity to create community peace and safety. In Erijaville, one participant drew on religious discourses to emphasise that males must provide for their households, and another, drawing on religious texts (but de-emphasising attendance in places of worship), believed that it was important to be an example to young people: “We must sweat for our household. It says so in the Bible. The Lord said your yoke is you will work for that wife.” And, “Read the Bible. You don’t have to attend church, but you mustn’t do wrong things in front of your child.”

In the Erijaville data a fair amount is said about the importance of focusing on commonalities between various groups, be it religious institutions or criminal justice organisations or even various individuals such as drug dealers. One participant noted the need to mentor young people as a way to mobilise spiritual capacity and religious assets to promote positive forms of masculinity and safety and peace. The following quotes illustrate this: “All churches and religions should get together in the square and decide to pray...”, and, “…put differences aside...even if they are drug dealers...include everyone and make a peace offering,” and, “Take the young people along a process.”

Likewise, in Memphis, it was felt that integrating peace promotion through churches and safety promotion through police was potentially useful. Participants stated, “…if the family communicates, talking and in discussion, even in a community like the neighbourhood watch; this will promote safety,” (this was supplemented with an example of the police and fire departments going to elementary schools to tell children about their jobs). Another commented, “…with a strong faith ... you want peace if you have a strong faith ... you have more of a reason to want to be peaceful. Pastors seem to have … more influence on
families and should speak more because of their credibility.” Memphis participants noted how faith beliefs and behaviours (providing hope, values, family support and prayer) are often quite incompatible with violent behaviour. For example, one female participant stated, “You know, you’re not going to find a praying person with a gun.”

PARTICIPANTS’ SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

In the final community asset mapping workshop exercises, participants in Erijaville and Memphis named potential next action steps for developing interventions to promote peace and safety that would incorporate what had been learnt through the research process in ongoing community building and workshops. Erijaville participants named steps that clustered in the areas of creating a drug-free environment, providing educational and personal growth venues, building family, providing safety and security, engaging churches/faith-based organisations and partnerships, promoting community building and improving service delivery.

Memphis participants’ suggestions for action steps clustered in the areas of mentoring, training youth and/or being a good role model or leader, engaging faith-based organisations and partnerships, using an asset-based approach, promoting community building, explicitly promoting positive masculinity, self-transformation or self-help, community volunteerism, and offering youth activities.

Across both Erijaville and Memphis, community building, organising and capacity building were seen as key action steps. However, Memphis tended to view this more as a traditional community organising response (particularly for youth), while the Erijaville participants focused more on community capacity building. Engaging churches and faith-based organisations was highlighted across both sites, especially in providing a ‘sanctuary’ or safe space for youth and others and in offering alternative pathways to being involved in crime, violence or drug abuse.

DISCUSSION

It is interesting that community members’ views of peace and safety, as revealed in the findings outlined above, link clearly to key aspects of safety and peace promotion as defined by various scholars. In particular, the community views highlight the need to mitigate against direct or episodic violence, with an emphasis on conflict management to promote harmony. The findings from the communities also reveal a strong emphasis on the development of prosocial values and capacities, an important aspect of peacebuilding. The findings also highlight the need to focus on structural aspects, including pursuing goals related more to equity and social justice. An important aspect of structural violence indirectly referred to in
these findings is the legacy of historical and contemporary oppression seen as a risk factor for violence in these communities. For example, the legacy of apartheid in South Africa was recognised as being a major factor in the Erijaville community, resulting in repeated requests for community healing from the trauma of the past. This is an important aspect of safety and peace promotion that often does not receive sufficient attention.

Findings from both sites were distinctive, yet evidenced similarities, among them being the view that in each of these contexts churches are key in providing ‘sanctuary’ and common space for neighbourhood gatherings and dialogue. Both sites emphasised the need for broader community involvement and responsibility for safety and peace promotion. Views on positive forms of masculinity in both sites suggested the need to enhance young males’ sense of selves as primary breadwinners or protective ‘heads of household’, without shaming regarding potential lack of finances, and intentional mentoring of male youth. Clearly, the role of intangible factors in promoting peace and safety was prominent in findings across sites, discussed in some detail below.

We earlier discussed the usefulness of an asset-based approach to the role of religion and religiosity, and of a distinction between tangible and intangible religious assets. The notion of ‘religious health assets’ (as termed in IRHAP, see ARHAP, 2006) has been introduced above (see also Gunderson & Cochrane, 2012). In the SCRATCHMAPS study, several ways in which such assets are regarded as important by community members were noted. What is most striking is the apparent link between our understanding of spiritual capacity (refer to the introduction in this article) and the research findings emerging from the community asset mapping workshops. In particular, this link is evident in the heavy emphasis that many participants placed on agency and taking responsibility for oneself, for one’s relationship with others and for the community in general. Agency, and its associated moral responsibility, was also linked to notions of empowerment and courage, seen as crucial in enabling new actions to be undertaken with some possibility of breaking through a distorted, painful actuality marked by violence and insecurity. Community members in Erijaville specifically introduced the term inpowerment, which is not unrelated to empowerment but emphasises a primary orientation to the world as directing how one embodies one’s capabilities (whether turned to good or ill). Members of the communities thus spoke of changing mindsets and of a positive attitude to the world within which they live their daily lives.

Linked to the idea of agency is the need to take moral responsibility for one’s actions, which emerged as a major theme across both sites. This links directly to the view of spiritual capacity as being about creative freedom and the responsibility it places before us of how we ‘ought’ to act in the world. Autonomy (taking responsibility for oneself) rather than heteronomy (handing one’s moral responsibility over to some external authority)
repeatedly enters into ways in which community members expressed themselves about what makes for peace. Personal responsibility is strongly and repeatedly linked to respect, empathy, care and compassion, all expressions of the moral imperative that accompanies our creative freedom. In short, moral responsibility, by virtue of how we choose to use our creative freedom, is reinforced here as a general characteristic of what it means to be or become human. This contributes to a theory of safety and peace promotion in two ways: first, it emphasises the importance of an internal subjective orientation that promotes pro-social behaviour through "empathy, respect for others, and a commitment to fairness and trust in relationships with other individuals and groups" (Christie et al., 2014, p.274); and, second, it points to the agency one has as a result of one's creative freedom to act, with others, in creating the objective structure and institutions that do not yet exist that can contribute towards a social ecology of peace and safety. Both elements reinforce a concept of peacebuilding and open up space for peacemaking (dealing with conflict and violence directly).

The values, attitudes, capacities and behaviours associated with the concept of spiritual capacity, and linked to our understandings of peacebuilding (Lazarus et al., 2015) emerged strongly from the two communities. This suggests two things when considering safety and peace promotion: first, material and environmental factors, unquestionably in every sense vital, are matched in their importance by non-material or supersensible, that is, spiritual factors. Second, paying attention to enhancing the capabilities, virtues and values that express human spiritual capacity in all its dimensions offers much to any intervention for peace and safety, whether about positive forms of masculinity or not. It may indeed be most critical to the motivational and emotional drives that enable people to take on greater responsibility for transforming themselves and the conditions within which they live, often referred to as ‘activation’ of individuals, and recently noted in the field of self-management of chronic diseases (Simmons, Baker, Schaefer, Miller, & Anders, 2009) and partnering with health providers (Hibbard, Stockard, Mahoney & Tusler, 2004).

**PREVENTION IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

Similarities and differences about views on factors that promote community safety and peace existed across two very culturally distinct and different sites in South Africa and the USA, but action steps identified in both sites point to several potential interventions as implications of the findings.

First, interventions aimed at promoting health, safety and peace would benefit from intentionally including and engaging communities and youth in faith-based programmes, focusing on developing and providing better role models, being more intentional in
promoting positive values such as love, trust, and compassion, and providing cultural and sports activities, after-school mentoring and other educational amenities. In communities where family and other social institutions are in serious trouble, religious institutions can play a key role in providing both people and structures to create spaces for safety and peace promotion.

Second, community organising and capacity building seems critical to strengthening community infrastructure to create more healthy, safe and peaceful neighbourhoods. For example, as has been done in Memphis (Cutts, 2011) and Erijaville (Taliep, Simmons, Van Niekerk, & Phillips, 2015), these communities, through faith-based organisations and/or sports, recreational, school and childcare venues, could offer training to enhance interpersonal values such as compassion and altruism, teach anger modulation or management skills, and promote resilience or other positive coping strategies through, for example, mindfulness meditation.

In terms of the promotion of positive forms of masculinity, both sites named the need for more intentional programmes that provide good role models for young males, as well as highlighting the ‘protector’ or ‘provider’ role for males in relation to healthy parenting, without stigmatising men who cannot provide financially for their partners or children. Congregational influences on building positive forms of masculinity in both settings were seen as providing alternative environments to foster healthier socialisation and learning, especially for youth who might otherwise be pulled into gang and/or criminal activity. However, discussion of these factors at a cross-site colloquium conducted in 2013 (Simmons, Isobell, Lazarus, & Van Gesselleen, 2014) raised a caution regarding the uncritical acceptance of all ‘positive masculinity’ attributes and behaviours identified by community members. For example, identifying ‘being employed’ as a ‘positive form of masculinity’ could be used to view unemployed men as expressing ‘negative’ masculinity, a dangerous consequence. The need to engage in further debate on this issue was therefore recommended.

Despite these valuable lessons, we recognise that this study manifests limited generalisability because of the necessarily participatory research approach, the small sample sizes, and the particular nature of the two local contexts. However, the intangible factors noted to potentially promote health, peace and safety generally and with regard to masculinity, across both the South African and US sites, merit further examination. Conducting research in settings with more diversity in religious traditions and culture could determine if these factors and our engagement with the concept of spiritual capacity are found to be as visible and pertinent. Findings from such research might help to develop and refine tailored community-based interventions for promoting peace and safety, specific to given sites, cultures and contexts, while potentially having a strong integral core of promoting spiritual capacity. Continued
work in the Erijaville site, designed to develop and test the efficacy and effectiveness of one such potential community-based intervention, is also warranted and has been pursued (Isobell, Simmons, Lazarus, & Taliep, 2015; Van Gessel, Taliep, Lazarus, Phillips, & Carelse, 2015).

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Lastly, and most importantly, we lovingly dedicate this paper to the memory of our co-author and Erijaville research colleague and friend, Cathy Hendricks, who passed on in May 2015.

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Seatbelt use among university students from 26 low-, middle- and high-income countries

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to estimate the prevalence of self-reported seatbelt use and sociodemographic, health risk behaviour and social-legal correlates among university students in 26 low-, middle- and high-income countries. Using anonymous questionnaires, data were collected from 16,770 undergraduate university students (mean age 20.9, SD=2.9) from 23 universities in 26 countries across Asia, Africa and the Americas. Results indicate that the percentage of university students reporting to be inconsistently using a seatbelt were 54.7% for all countries, 56.0% for men and 53.7% for women. In multivariate logistic regression, younger age, poorer family background, living in a low-income or lower-middle-income country, having no national seatbelt law or a law that does not apply to all occupants, poor attitudes towards seatbelt use, not always following the speed limit, having depressive symptoms, drug use, and low physical activity were associated with self-reported inconsistent seatbelt use. High self-reported inconsistent seatbelt use was found and several risk factors were identified which can be utilised in seatbelt use promotion programmes.

Keywords: seatbelt use, traffic-related behaviour, health risk behaviour, depression, legislation, university students, multi-country
INTRODUCTION

The majority (91%) of the world’s road traffic fatalities occur in low-income and middle-income countries, even though these countries have only about half of the world’s vehicles (WHO, 2013). Although in low- and middle-income countries motor vehicle occupants do not comprise the majority of fatalities on the road, there is a huge increase in new car registrations in developing countries, which will lead to rises in the number of vehicle occupant deaths and injuries (WHO, 2015). One of the major risk factors for road traffic injuries and deaths among vehicle occupants is the failure to use a seatbelt (WHO, 2013).

Solutions to prevent road traffic injuries in low- and middle-income countries include speed limits and enforcement, blood alcohol concentration limits and random breath testing, seatbelts and child restraints, helmets for riders of bicycles and motorised two-wheelers, and visibility of road users (WHO, 2004). The use of a seatbelt can reduce the risk of a fatal injury for drivers and front seat passengers by 40-50 percent (WHO, 2013). The rate of wearing a seatbelt differs greatly between countries and is largely influenced by the existence and enforcement of mandatory seatbelt laws (WHO, 2013).

In low- and middle-income countries seatbelt usage rates seem generally much lower than in high-income countries (WHO, 2014). In a study among adults in four middle-income countries (Egypt, Mexico, Russia, Turkey), the average seatbelt-wearing rates was low (under 60% in most sites) (Vecino-Ortiz et al., 2014). Studies among university students in high-income countries found that in 13 European countries, 27% among male and 23% among female students reported inconsistent seatbelt use (Steptoe et al., 2002), 69% among Black male college students in the US failed to use seatbelts as a passenger and 48% as a driver (Ajibade, 2010) and almost 40% of university students in Spain inconsistently (not always or almost always) used seatbelts on urban roads (Cunill, Gras, Planes, Oliveras & Sullman, 2004). Among university and adolescent students in low- and middle-income countries, 19% of medical university students in Kazakhstan had not used seatbelts in the front seat (Nugmanova, Ussatayeva & McNutt, 2015), 82% inconsistently (not always) used seatbelts among Iranian driving college students (Mohammadi, 2011), 81.3% of a sample of students of a local university in Thailand inconsistently (not always) used a front seatbelt (Stephan et al., 2011), 42.2% to 55.7% drove without a seatbelt among Turkish university students (Oksuz & Malhan, 2005), and among adolescent students in India 52.4% reported ‘not always’ wearing a seatbelt (Sharma, Grover & Chaturvedi, 2007).

Factors associated with inconsistent seatbelt use, predominantly in university students and general adults, may include sociodemographic factors, health risk behaviours and social-
legal factors. Sociodemographic factors may include being male (university students in USA, Oleckno & Blacconiere, 1990; university students in Turkey, Oksuz & Malhan, 2005; general adult drivers in Thailand, Siviroj, Peltzer, Pengpid & Morarit, 2012) and specific population groups such as non-whites (university students in USA, Oleckno & Blacconiere, 1990). Health risk behaviours may include substance use such as tobacco use (university students in USA, Everett, Lowry, Cohen & Dellinger, 1999; university students in USA, Oleckno & Blacconiere, 1990), heavy drinking (university students in USA, Everett et al., 1999), and drug use (university students in USA, Everett et al., 1999; university students in USA, Oleckno & Blacconiere, 1990). Traffic-related health risk factors include alcohol-impaired driving (university students in 13 European countries, Steptoe et al., 2002), not obeying speed limits (university students in 13 European countries, Steptoe et al., 2002), and having had accidents in last three years (university students in Iran, Mohammadi, 2011). Other health risk behaviours include physical inactivity (university students in USA, Dinger, Brittain & Hutchinson, 2014), being obese (school-going adolescents in USA, Price, Dake, Balls-Berry & Wielinski, 2011), lack of health-promoting behaviour (university students in USA, Oleckno & Blacconiere, 1990). Social-legal factors include negative social influence (general drivers and passengers in Spain, Cunill et al., 2004), lack of legislation and law enforcement (university students in 13 European countries, Steptoe et al., 2002).

The aim of this study was to estimate the prevalence of self-reported seatbelt use and sociodemographic, health risk behaviour and social-legal correlates among university students in 26 low-, middle- and high-income countries.

METHODS

SAMPLE AND PROCEDURE

This cross-sectional study was carried out with a network of collaborators in participating countries (see acknowledgments). The anonymous, self-administered questionnaire used for data collection was developed in English, then translated and back-translated into the languages (Arabic, Bahasa, Chinese, French, Lao, Russian, Spanish, Thai, Turkish) of the participating countries. In each country where translated questionnaires were used, they were pilot tested for face validity and understanding among 25 students who were not from the sample population. The study was initiated through personal academic contacts of the principal investigators; thus universities were purposefully selected. These collaborators arranged for data to be collected in 2013 from an intended 400 male and 400 female undergraduate university students aged 16-30 years by trained research assistants in one or two universities in their respective countries. The universities involved were located in the capital cities or other major cities in the participating countries. Research assistants working in the participating universities asked classes of undergraduate students to complete the
questionnaire at the end of a teaching class. Classes were recruited according to timetable scheduling using stratified random sampling. We included no incentive for participation, and there were no penalties for refusing to complete the survey. The students who completed the survey varied in the number of years for which they had attended the university. A variety of majors were involved, including education, humanities and arts, social sciences, business and law, science, engineering, manufacturing and construction, agriculture, health and welfare, and services. Written informed consent was obtained from participating students, and the study was conducted in 2013. Ethics approvals were obtained from all participating institutions.

MEASURES

Seatbelt use was assessed with the question, “When driving or riding in the front seat of a car, do you wear a seatbelt?” Response options included 1=All of the time, 2=Some of the time, 3=Never and 4=I don’t ride in cars (Wardle & Steptoe, 1991). Inconsistent seatbelt use was defined as ‘not all of the time’ wearing a seatbelt. Attitudes towards the seatbelt use was assessed with the question, “How important do you feel it is to wear a seatbelt?” Response options ranged from 1=Not important to 10=Very important (Wardle & Steptoe, 1991). A small test-retest study suggests that these survey questions showed acceptable short-term stability (Wardle & Steptoe, 1991). Furthermore, study countries were classified according to their national seatbelt law into A=National seatbelt law applies to all occupants and B=No seatbelt law or law does not apply to all occupants (WHO, 2013).

Sociodemographic questions included age, gender and socioeconomic background. The latter was assessed by rating their family background as wealthy (within the highest 25% in your country in terms of wealth), quite well off (within the 50% to 75% range in their country), not very well off (within the 25% to 50% range in your country), or quite poor (within the lowest 25% in their country in terms of wealth) (Wardle & Steptoe, 1991). Furthermore, study countries were classified according to income into four categories, low-income country, lower-middle-income country, upper-middle-income country, and high-income country (World Bank, 2013).

TRAFFIC-RELATED VARIABLES

Drinking and driving. Participants were asked, “Over the last year, how many times did you drive a car or ride a motorcycle when you felt that you had perhaps had too much to drink?” Response options were ‘never’, or a numerical indication of the number of times (Wardle & Steptoe, 1991). Driving above the speed limit. Participants who drive a car were asked, “If you do drive a car, do you travel within the speed limit?” Response options ranged from 1=All of the time to 4=Little of the time (Wardle & Steptoe, 1991). A small test-retest study suggested that these survey questions showed acceptable short-term stability (Wardle & Steptoe, 1991).
Traffic injury. Participants were asked, “During the past 12 months, how many times were you seriously injured?” Serious injury was defined as ‘When it makes you miss at least one full day of usual activities, such as university, sports, or a job, or requires treatment by a doctor or nurse’. Furthermore, “During the past 12 months, what was the major cause of the most serious injury that happened to you?” Among the different response options, two related to traffic injury, i.e., “I was in a motor vehicle accident or hit by a motor vehicle.” And “I was on a motorcycle.” (CDC, 2014). A validation study of the health risk behaviour, including an injury component of the Global School Health Survey (GSHS) questionnaire, found good validity in a study in a developing country (Fiji) (Becker et al., 2010).

MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE

Centre for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D). We assessed depressive symptoms using the 10-item version of the CES-D (Andresen, Malmgren, Carter & Patrick, 1994). Scoring is classified from 0-9 as having a mild level of depressive symptoms, 10 to 14 as moderate depressive symptoms, and 15 representing severe depressive symptoms (Kilbourne et al., 2002). The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of this 10-item scale was 0.74 in this study.

Tobacco use was assessed with the question: “Do you currently use one or more of the following tobacco products (cigarettes, snuff, chewing tobacco, cigars, etc.)?” Response options were “yes” or “no” (WHO, 1998).

Binge drinking was assessed with one item, “How often do you have (for men) five or more and (for women) four or more drinks on one occasion?” Response options ranged from 1=Never to 5=Daily or almost daily (Babor, Higgins-Biddle, Saunders & Monteiro, 2001).

Drug use was assessed with the question, “How often have you taken drugs in the past 12 months; other than prescribed by the healthcare provider?” Response options included 1=0 times to 4=10 or more times.

The South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS), a standardised measure of pathological gambling and gambling behaviours in their lifetime (Lesieur & Blume, 1987), was used to assess nine different gambling behaviours, e.g., “Played cards for money.” Response options ranged from 1=Not at all to 3=Once a week or more. Students who scored positive (in terms of more than once a week) on any of the nine gambling behaviours were classified as engaged in gambling. Cronbach alpha for this nine-item scale was 0.84 in this sample.

Physical activity was assessed using the self-administered International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ, 2006) short version, for the last seven days (IPAQ-S7S). We used the
instructions given in the IPAQ manual for reliability and validity, which is detailed elsewhere (Craig et al., 2003). We categorised physical activity (short form) according to the official IPAQ scoring protocol (IPAQ, 2014) as low, moderate and high. In a 12-country reliability and validity study, the IPAQ questionnaire produced repeatable data (Spearman’s rho clustered around 0.8) and criterion validity had a median rho of about 0.30 (Craig et al., 2003).

**Anthropometric measurements.** Height (without footwear) was measured using a stadiometer and weight (without footwear and any heavy accessories) was assessed with a calibrated weighing scale. Body mass index (BMI) was calculated as weight in kilograms divided by height in metre squared. There was a low response rate of anthropometric measurements for Grenada and Cameroon and for the China Hongkong sub-sample, and in Bangladesh and Indonesia body weight and height were collected by self-report. BMI was used as an indicator of obesity (≥27.5 kg/m²) in the East and South Asian participants (WHO Expert Consultation, 2004), and for the other countries, obesity was defined as BMI=30 kg/m² (WHO, 2014).

**DATA ANALYSIS**

The data were analysed using IBM SPSS (version 20.0). The proportion of seatbelt use behaviour, sociodemographic factors, traffic-related behaviour, mental health and substance use variables was calculated as a percentage. The Pearson chi-square test was used to calculate gender differences. Logistic regression analysis was done with STATA to calculate the crude odds ratio (OR) with 95% confidence interval (CI) to determine the associations between the potential determinants and inconsistent seatbelt use, overall and by the income level of the study countries. All variables which were statistically significant (P < .05) in bivariate analyses were included in the multivariable model. The country was entered as the primary sampling unit for survey analysis in STATA in order to achieve accurate CIs, given the clustered nature of the data.

**RESULTS**

**DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS**

The final sample included 16 770 university students (41.0% men and 59.0% women), with a mean age of 20.9 years (SD=2.9). Study response rates in 22 countries were over 90% and in Barbados, Grenada, Madagascar and Egypt the response rates were 41.4%, 53.0%, 78.8% and 82.2%, respectively. The percentage of university students reporting to be inconsistently using a seatbelt were 54.7% for all countries, 56.0% for men and 53.7% for women, ranging from 12.1% in Mauritius to 86.3% in Tunisia. In several countries (Cameroon, Ivory Coast, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkey), male students more frequently inconsistently used seatbelts than female students, while in some other countries (China,
Laos, Madagascar) women more frequently inconsistently used seatbelts than men. Regarding the importance of seatbelt use, overall, students endorsed with a high mean (7.9, range 1-10) the importance of seatbelt use, ranging from 6.2 in Egypt and Nigeria to 9.5 in Indonesia (see Table 1).

Table 1. Seatbelt use and attitudes by study country and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Importance of seatbelt use</th>
<th>National seatbelt law</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>16770</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>7.9 (2.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean and South America</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>0.362</td>
<td>8.6 (2.0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>8.5 (2.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>0.997</td>
<td>8.4 (2.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>0.546</td>
<td>8.0 (2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>0.266</td>
<td>8.9 (1.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>8.5 (2.5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ivory Coast</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>8.9 (3.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>6.5 (3.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>9.0 (3.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>0.619</td>
<td>8.8 (2.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>0.536</td>
<td>6.2 (3.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>8.0 (2.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa, Near East and Central Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>6.2 (3.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>7.3 (3.7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>7.8 (2.8)</td>
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<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>8.3 (2.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>841</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>0.266</td>
<td>8.2 (2.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia and China</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>0.256</td>
<td>7.2 (3.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>63.1</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>0.412</td>
<td>7.4 (3.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>84.8</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>0.303</td>
<td>7.5 (2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>7.6 (2.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>0.263</td>
<td>9.5 (1.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>7.0 (3.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ASSOCIATIONS WITH INCONSISTENT SEATBELT USE

In multivariate logistic regression, it was found that younger age, having a not well-off or poor economic family background, living in a low-income or lower-middle-income country, having no national seatbelt law or a law that does not apply to all occupants, poor attitudes towards seatbelt use, not always following the speed limit when driving a car, having depressive symptoms, drug use in the past 12 months, and low physical activity were associated with self-reported inconsistent seatbelt use (see Table 2).

Table 2. Associations between inconsistent seatbelt use and sociodemographic, health risk behaviour and social-legal variables in university students from 26 low- and middle-income and high-income countries, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Inconsistent seatbelt use</th>
<th>UOR (95% CI)</th>
<th>AOR (95% CI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sociodemographics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age in years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 -19</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 21</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>0.82 (0.76-0.88)**</td>
<td>0.74 (0.66-0.84)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 or more</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>0.67 (0.62-0.72)**</td>
<td>0.68 (0.60-0.77)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>1.10 (1.03-1.17)**</td>
<td>1.03 (0.91-1.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not well off/Poor</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealthy/ Quite well off</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>0.65 (0.61-0.69)**</td>
<td>0.54 (0.49-0.60)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper middle income/High income</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income/Lower middle income</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>2.31 (2.17-2.47)**</td>
<td>2.83 (2.54-3.15)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health risk behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic-related behaviour</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>0.94 (0.85-1.03)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1Low-income country; 2Lower-middle-income country; 3Upper-middle-income country; 4High-income country (Source: World Bank, 2013). 5A=National seatbelt law applies to all occupants; 6B=No seatbelt law or law does not apply to all occupants (Source: WHO, 2013)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Inconsistent seatbelt use</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>UOR (95% CI)</strong></td>
<td><strong>AOR (95% CI)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sociodemographics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not always following speed limit</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>1.87 (1.73-2.03)***</td>
<td>1.55 (1.49-1.72)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in motor vehicle accident</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.12 (0.87-1.44)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in motor cycle accident</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.50 (1.16-1.94)**</td>
<td>1.14 (0.89-1.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mental health and substance use</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression symptoms (severe)</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>1.20 (1.10-1.32)***</td>
<td>1.28 (1.11-1.49)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current tobacco use</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>1.12 (1.02-1.22)*</td>
<td>1.02 (0.82-1.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binge drinking in past month</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>1.02 (0.93-1.11)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug use in past 12 months</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>1.46 (1.35-1.58)***</td>
<td>1.32 (1.17-1.48)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling (&gt;once a week)</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>1.13 (1.01-1.26)*</td>
<td>1.15 (0.96-1.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical activity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>0.85 (0.78-0.92)***</td>
<td>0.77 (0.67-0.88)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>0.72 (0.67-0.77)***</td>
<td>0.72 (0.65-0.81)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BMI obesity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0.89 (0.77-1.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social-legal factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Importance of seatbelt use</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>0.28 (0.25-0.31)***</td>
<td>0.28 (0.23-0.32)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>0.16 (0.14-0.17)***</td>
<td>0.13 (0.12-0.15)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National seatbelt law</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No seatbelt law or law does not apply to all occupants</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National seatbelt law applies to all occupants</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>0.43 (0.40-0.46)***</td>
<td>0.71 (0.61-0.83)***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***P<.001; **P<.01; *P<.05; UOR=Unadjusted Odds Ratio; AOR=Adjusted Odds Ratio; CI=Confidence Interval

ASSOCIATIONS WITH INCONSISTENT SEATBELT USE BY INCOME LEVEL OF STUDY COUNTRY

In multivariate logistic regression in both students from low-income or lower-middle-income and in the upper-middle-income or high-income countries, younger age, having a not well-off or poor economic family background, having no national seatbelt law or a law that does not apply to all occupants, poor attitudes towards seatbelt use, and not always following the speed limit when driving a car were associated with self-reported inconsistent seatbelt use. In addition, among students from low- and lower-middle-income level countries, lack of physical activity and depression were positively, and tobacco use and drink driving were negatively associated with inconsistent seatbelt use, while among students from upper-middle-income or high-income countries, binge drinking and illicit drug use were additionally associated with inconsistent seatbelt use (see Table 3).
### Table 3: Associations between inconsistent seatbelt use and sociodemographic, health risk behaviour and social-legal variables among university students by income level of study country, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Inconsistent seatbelt use</th>
<th>Low income/ Lower middle income</th>
<th>Upper middle income/High income</th>
<th>AOR (95% CI)</th>
<th>AOR (95% CI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sociodemographics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age in years</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 -19</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 21</td>
<td>0.77 (0.64-0.91)**</td>
<td>0.69 (0.53-0.89)**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 or more</td>
<td>0.65 (0.54-0.78)**</td>
<td>0.79 (0.61-1.02)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>–</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wealth</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not well off/Poor</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealthy/ Quite well off</td>
<td>0.65 (0.55-0.77)**</td>
<td>0.39 (0.32-0.49)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health risk behaviour</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traffic-related behaviour</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking and driving</td>
<td>1.16 (0.95-1.42)</td>
<td>0.45 (0.36-0.56)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not always following speed limit</td>
<td>1.76 (1.52-2.04)*****</td>
<td>1.70 (1.37-2.11)*****</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in motor vehicle accident</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in motor cycle accident</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1.82 (0.73-4.53)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mental health and substance use</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression symptoms (severe)</td>
<td>1.27 (1.05-1.55)*</td>
<td>1.29 (0.96-1.74)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current tobacco use</td>
<td>0.67 (0.59-0.80)*****</td>
<td>0.97 (0.74-1.25)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binge drinking in past month</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1.78 (1.41-2.16)*****</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug use in past 12 months</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1.40 (1.12-1.76)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling (&gt;once a week)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1.19 (0.89-1.60)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical activity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>0.80 (0.64-0.98)*</td>
<td>0.84 (0.66-1.07)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>0.61 (0.52-0.72)*****</td>
<td>0.81 (0.64-1.03)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BMI obesity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.88 (0.55-1.39)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social-legal factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Importance of seatbelt use</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-6</td>
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***P<.001; **P<.01; *P<.05; AOR=Adjusted Odds Ratio; CI=Confidence Interval
DISCUSSION

In this large study of university students from 26 low-, middle- and high-income countries, it was found in agreement with previous studies (Mohammadi, 2011; Nanakorn et al., 1999; Oksuz & Malhan, 2005; Sharma et al., 2007) that more than half of the students inconsistently used a seatbelt by self-report when driving or sitting in the front seat of a car. This result is clearly higher than in a previous survey of self-reported inconsistent seatbelt use among university students in 13 European countries (25%) (Steptoe et al., 2002). Our study finding is a cause for concern and calls for seatbelt health promotion intervention with this university student population, in particular in low-income and lower-middle-income countries.

The study found that male students were more likely than female students to inconsistently use a seatbelt in most study countries. This finding concurs with previous study findings (Oleckno & Blacconiere, 1990; Oksuz & Malhan, 2005; Siviroj et al., 2012). In addition, younger students were more likely than older students to inconsistently use a seatbelt. This could mean that seatbelt promotion programmes should particularly target young male students in most study countries. In two study countries (Laos and Madagascar) inconsistent seatbelt use was significantly higher in female than male students, meaning that in Laos and Madagascar female university students should be particularly targeted in seatbelt promotion.

The study further found that poorer family background, living in a country with no national seatbelt law or a law that does not apply to all occupants were significantly associated with poorer seatbelt use. Previous studies have emphasised the importance of seatbelt legislation and law enforcement (Steptoe et al., 2002; WHO, 2013) in improving seatbelt use rates. Living in a poorer country seems to be associated with poorer seatbelt legislation in the study low-income countries (Bangladesh, Madagascar) and lower-middle-income countries (Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Egypt, Pakistan, Indonesia, Laos) compared to study high-income (Barbados, Singapore) and upper-middle-income countries (Grenada, Jamaica, Columbia, Venezuela, Namibia, South Africa, China). Analysing students from low- or lower-middle-income and upper-middle-income or higher-income countries separately, this study found that among students from upper-middle-income or high-income countries, binge drinking and illicit drug use were additionally associated with inconsistent seatbelt use. In previous studies among university students across multiple countries (Peltzer & Pengpid, 2016; in print), the prevalence of binge drinking and illicit drug use was significantly higher among students in upper-middle- and high-income countries than in low- and lower-middle-income countries. The association between heavy drinking, illicit drug use and inconsistent seatbelt use has previously been
reported in several studies among university students in a high-income country (USA) (Everett et al., 1999; Oleckno & Blacconiere, 1990).

The study also found that university students who rated seatbelt use as more important carried it out more often. This finding is in agreement with previous studies (Steptoe et al., 2002), and should be utilised in the promotion of seatbelt use programmes. The study further found that several (other) health risk behaviours (not always following the speed limit when driving a car, illicit drug use, physically inactive) and having depressive symptoms were more common in students inconsistently using a seatbelt compared to students consistently wearing a seatbelt. These findings are in agreement with some previous studies (Dinger et al., 2014; Everett et al., 1999; Oleckno & Blacconiere, 1990; Steptoe et al., 2002), and seem to confirm the clustering of other health risk behaviours with lack of seatbelt use. This is even more relevant, since additional health risk behaviours (tobacco use, gambling, and having been in a motorcycle accident) were associated with inconsistent seatbelt use in bivariate analyses, as also found in previous studies (Everett et al., 1999; Oleckno & Blacconiere, 1990; Mohammadi, 2011). Seatbelt promotion programmes should incorporate other clustering health risk behaviours such as not always following speed limits, substance use, physical inactivity and depression symptoms, as well as male students in their interventions. Consequently, injury prevention programmes should selectively target these high-risk motor vehicle drivers and passengers to improve seatbelt compliance and limit associated injury (Ball, Kirkpatrick & Brenneman, 2005).

Unlike in previous studies (Price et al., 2011; Steptoe et al., 2002), this study did not find an association or negative association between alcohol-impaired driving, being obese and inconsistent seatbelt use. It is unclear why these findings were found, and further studies are encouraged to investigate the body weight status, drinking and driving and seatbelt use.

Road traffic injury prevention and control programmes are most effective when they combine several components, including appropriate engineering of seatbelts, policy, enforcement, use of incentives, and health promotion education (Akhmadeeva, Andreeva, Sussman, Khusnutdinova & Simons-Morton, 2008; Mace et al., 2001). Akhmadeeva et al. (2008, p.288) note that “there is a great and urgent need for cross-regional and cross-national translation of effective traffic safety initiatives, including the promotion of seatbelt use.”

Considering that the habitual act of seatbelt use or non-use is a result of habits performed largely unintentionally, innovative campaigns or programmes to break the ‘automatic’ habit could include timing the seatbelt message to be delivered at the time when students are prone to revaluate their habits (e.g., beginning of the academic year, change of residence,
etc.), aiming at stopping the bad habit of inconsistent seatbelt use from forming before it starts, and using positive modelling and social influence (Hoekstra & Wegman, 2011; Maio et al., 2007).

**STUDY LIMITATIONS**

This study had several limitations. The study was cross-sectional, so causal conclusions cannot be drawn. The investigation was carried out with students from one or two universities in each country, and inclusion of other centres could have resulted in different results. University students are not representative of young adults in general, and the seatbelt use behaviour, traffic-related and health risk behaviour may be different in other sectors of the population. The data collection, in particular seatbelt use, by self-report could have resulted in desired participants’ responses. Future studies should employ observations of actual seatbelt use.

**CONCLUSION**

In this large study among university students from 26 low-, middle- and high-income countries, results suggest a high self-reported inconsistent seatbelt use. Several risk factors were identified, which can be utilised in reaching these young people for change strategies in seatbelt use programmes.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

REFERENCES


Learners’ self-reports of exposure to violence in South African schools: A gendered reflection

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ABSTRACT

The pervasive worldwide phenomenon of gender-based violence in schools poses a threat to education as a vehicle of economic development and economic freedom. Gender violence in and around schools is a global problem with serious implications for the educational attainment, health and wellbeing of both girls and boys. This paper explores the gendered nature of violence in selected schools in six provinces in South Africa. A qualitative study following a community-centred, capacity-building approach used focus group interviews to collect data from a purposive sample of learners aged between 13 and 17 years who were perpetrators or victims of violence. The aim was to give voice to learners about their experiences of violence in schools. Findings indicated a high incidence of gender-based violence in schools. Boys mainly drew on gender-biased discourses to orchestrate demeaning gendered comments, sexualised gestures, sexual harassment and bullying. Teachers’ assault of learners in the form of corporal punishment was also deeply implicated in both girls’ and boys’ reports of gender-based violence. Recommendations are made for gender-based awareness campaigns, which involve learners, parents and teachers, and the setting up of school-based structures for learner peer support as critical strategies for combating gender-based violence in schools.

Keywords: Femininities, masculinities, power, management, gender, school violence

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INTRODUCTION

Violence is a pervasive and worldwide phenomenon, especially among young people. Reports indicate that young people are particularly affected by violent crime both at school and in their immediate communities (Community Information and Epidemiological Technologies [CIET], 2000; Human Rights Watch, 2001) through political unrest, armed conflict, gang activity, and familial violence. South Africa manifests very high levels of sexual and other forms of violence and, as such, levels of homicide in South Africa are among the highest in the world (Saltmarsh, Robinson, & Davies, 2012). According to a report by the South African Medical Research Council (2011), violence is profoundly gendered, with young men aged between 15 and 29 years disproportionately engaged in violence as both victims and perpetrators.

The high levels of violence in South African and other communities have permeated schools. Violence is a daily reality for many students around the world, with serious implications for the educational attainment, health and wellbeing of both girls and boys (Management Systems International [MSI], 2008). According to Green, Robles and Stout (2013), between 500 million and 1,5 billion children experience violence every year, many in schools. Gender violence has been identified as a substantial public health and an intractable educational problem (Human Rights Watch, 2001; Mathews, Abrahams, Jewkes, Martin, & Lombard, 2013). The right to education and gender equality is central to development objectives described both in Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The EFA goals aim to achieve gender equality and improvement in all aspects of the quality of education and the MDGs aim to achieve universal primary education and to eliminate gender disparity in education (UNESCO, 2007). Dunne (2009) emphasises that the widespread violence in the school context is an area of concern, because it impacts on the achievement of the MDGs related to equal access to education for both boys and girls in developing countries. Gender-based violence does not only limit individual freedom, but also prevents schools from building the capacity of students.

Gender-based violence is also endemic in South Africa. A report by the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) (2008) estimated that only 23% of South African learners said they felt safe at school. Zulu, Urrbani and Van der Merwe (2004), Burton (2008) and Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) concur that the level of violence in schools is unacceptably high. Similarly, Burton and Leoschut (2013) indicate that violence in or around schools is one of the most important issues facing young people in South Africa today. Violence in schools has garnered considerable media attention in South Africa in recent years (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Media reports often document horrific incidents involving different forms of violence that occur in South African schools, ranging from physical violence such as
beating and kicking, psychological and emotional violence and sexual violence such as unwanted sexual comments and touching (De Wet, 2005; De Wet & Jacobs, 2009). Children in South Africa are prey to daily incidents of robbery, assault, shootings, rape and murder (Burton, 2007). School violence has become part of everyday life in some schools where learners’ safety cannot be guaranteed. Violence in schools deprives children of education, which is their fundamental right. In South Africa, many schools are no longer regarded as centres of knowledge; instead, they have been transformed into battlegrounds (Asbeh, 2010).

The study reported on in this paper forms part of an initiative on school violence undertaken by a South African university in six provinces in South Africa in 2013. The aims of the project were to investigate the dynamics of violence in schools and suggest strategies that could be used to combat school violence. A qualitative inquiry using focus group interviews as data collection examined learners’ self-reports of violence in terms of the type of violence experienced, the victim-perpetrator relationship and how violence is managed by the school. The aim was to give voice to the learners about their perception of violence in their schools. Victims as well as perpetrators were selected to participate and were encouraged to draw on their personal experiences of violence in the school.

CONCEPTUALISATION OF SCHOOL-RELATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) refers to acts of sexual, physical or psychological violence inflicted on children in and around schools that are due to stereotypes and roles or norms attributed to or expected of them on the basis of their sex or gendered identity (Green et al., 2013). Green et al., (2013) further point that SRGBV relate to the differences between girls’ and boys’ experience of and vulnerabilities to violence. Forms of gender violence are not fixed; they evolve to fit different times, circumstances and cultures (Leach, 2008). This suggests that gender roles are not static and they change according to different cultures due to the dynamic nature of culture. Gender has been enlivened by social constructionist notions of gender as fluid, multiple and complex manifestations of human abilities and potentialities. In developing countries in particular, school-related violence takes place in the context of inequality and specific cultural beliefs and attitudes about gender roles, especially concerning male and female sexuality (Wilson, 2014).

Skiba (2002) has classified gender-based violence into two categories: explicit gender violence and implicit gender violence. Explicit gender violence includes sexual harassment, assault, intimidation and rape. Implicit gender violence includes corporal punishment, bullying, verbal and psychological abuse and teachers’ unofficial use of students for
labour. This violence originates in the imbalance of power between males and females, the
gendered hierarchy and separation of tasks and socially accepted views of what constitutes
masculine and feminine behaviour. For example, in traditional societies girls do domestic
chores such as cleaning and boys do tasks such as herding cattle as this is a job associated
with ‘being a man’. In the African context it is believed that if a man can look after his cattle
successfully, he can also look after his family.

**SCHOOL AS A GENDERED COMMUNITY**

Violence is a means through which community practices and hierarchies of power are
perpetuated and regulated within the school context. Social practices within social
institutions like families, schools and communities are all relevant to shaping gender and
other identities (e.g., religious, ethnic, etc.). Schools should be seen as places of knowledge
production and economic advancement. However, in practice, schools breed and perpetuate
the gendered inequalities from the communities they serve. Leach and Humphreys (2007)
argue that the recent recognition that schools can be violent places has tended to ignore
the fact that many such acts originate in unequal and antagonistic gender relations, which
are tolerated and ‘normalised’ by everyday school structures and processes. Bhana (2013)
posits that schools are key sites for the production and reproduction of gender relations
and inequalities.

Green et al. (2013) maintain that no school is immune from the attitudes and beliefs of the
broader society that promote harmful gender-based norms and condone acts of gender-
based violence. Thus, schools tend to reproduce dominant, unequal power relations
between boys and girls in society. Boys and girls learn that society expects them to behave
differently and to fulfil socially constructed gender roles. Schools are part of society and
reflect its traditions and values. Davids (2013) asserts that schools often become spaces
where social problems are played out with serious consequences for all. For instance,
if assault is a natural phenomenon in communities, the level of violence in the school
will increase. Schools are one such institution where gender is learnt and where power
structures can normalise explicit forms of gender-based violence (Dunne et al., 2013). In
the school context girls are given roles different to those given to boys. Girls perform light
tasks such as cleaning windows and boys perform demanding tasks such as cleaning the
schoolyard. As Dunne (2009) mentioned, gender differences between girls and boys in the
domestic sphere are often replicated in the schools. These gender roles produce a gender
hierarchy, which more often than not is one where the male hierarchy dominates.

Schools are therefore seen as important agents of socialisation because they reinforce
gender socialisation that occurs in the home. Dunne (2009) contends that the daily routine

of a school is structured by formal and informal rules and ways of behaviour, and a gender regime is manifested as part of this routine. As a social construction, gender is not natural, but is socially learned and continually performed in different ways as we interact with different people in different social contexts (MacNaughton, 2000). Dunne (2009) adds that ways of relating and the types of interaction among boys and girls, and between teachers and male and female students, are part of the gender regime and serve to normalise certain types of behaviour. In school, they are rooted in the formal and informal processes of schooling, which serve to establish the gendered norms of behaviour in what is commonly termed a ‘gender regime’ (Connell, 2002). Dunne (2007) identifies examples of gender regimes that manifest themselves as the school’s daily routine. These are the following:

(a) Physical space: The gender regime determines the physical space that boys and girls occupy. For example, in the classroom girls and boys are separated spatially.
(b) Peer pressure: This is seen as part of the school environment, for example, teasing, exclusion and intimidation.
(c) Implicit message of accountability: The school knows who to blame if something goes wrong in the school; for example, if the school window is broken, boys will be the suspects.

The above gender regimes are reinforced by girls and boys in the school with both groups protecting their space, often in very stereotyped manners.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is conceptually located within social-learning theory and power-control theory. Social-learning theory is a behaviourist approach, which seeks to explain gender socialisation, the behaviour of men and women, how they learn from one another, and how the social environment makes people act in certain ways. Power-control theory holds that a violent party consciously uses the technique of violence to exercise and maintain control and power over another person (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004).

Social-learning theory studies gender socialisation and asserts that people learn through observation, imitation and modelling (Bandura, 1977). Gender roles are social constructs that are propagated by parents during childhood and there are behaviours associated with males and females (Brent & Lewis, 2014). Gender is socially constructed and it is influenced by the person’s interactions with parents, teachers, and mass media and sports (Brent & Lewis, 2014). Socialisation refers to the process by which a person learns the beliefs, values and behaviour of his or her society (Brent & Lewis, 2014). Society plays the major role in determining who the person becomes. In many societies, males learn to be dominant and aggressive; females learn to be passive and submissive (MSI, 2008). Socialisation is
achieved as the influence of society, and the influence of our interactions work together to shape who we become. Schools are major contexts for gender socialisation, in part because children spend large amounts of time engaged with peers in such settings (Klein, 1985). School teaches broader social values, such as diversity and multiculturalism, through both the curriculum and the process of interacting with peers. The school does this through the hidden curriculum and through the ‘corridor’ curriculum. The hidden curriculum refers to values that are taught through the presentation of the standard curriculum that are not an explicit part of the curriculum and the ‘corridor’ curriculum refers to lessons that children teach one another at school when not in class (Brent & Lewis, 2014).

What happens in the school is usually a reflection of what is happening in society. Disorganised and disorderly communities in which learners live their lives are powerful facilitators of crime and violence. For example, some community members sell drugs to learners and some adults give learners drugs to sell at the school. In some instances, learners grow up in communities where violent and aggressive behaviour is modelled by significant individuals in their lives, such as their parents or relatives. Bandura (1977) argues that violent behaviour that is modelled is more likely to be imitated and replicated when the person modelling the behaviour has a relationship with the child or young person, than when there is no relationship between the individuals. In addition, society as a socialisation agent creates certain laws and roles that are in favour of women and men. For example, women are not supposed to display violent behaviour but it is acceptable for men to display this, concurrent with the power that men hold in society (Connell, 1995).

Power-control theory is a sociological theory that sets out to explain gender differences in delinquency based on the power play going on in the family structure, as well as the parental controls exercised on boys versus girls. Another school of thought stresses the role of power control as the cause of gender-based violence. Power may be exerted in a number of ways in forms of leadership, decision making and rule making (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). It might also be used in more negative and discriminatory ways ranging from mild to more severe forms. Examples include forms of social exclusion, denial of privileges or rights, extraction of labour or services, psychological cruelty, silencing, verbal abuse, physical force and sexual violence. Feminist scholars argue that domestic violence is rooted in gender and power, and that it represents men’s active attempts to maintain dominance and control over women (Anderson, 1997). Men are seen to use violence as an instrument to perpetuate dominance over women in order to subordinate them. As Foucault (1972) pointed out, power is not a possession but it is something that is gained through certain measures. This suggests that for power to act in a particular way, it depends on the knowledge currently prevailing in society. Society socialises boys and girls into masculine and feminine adults, because certain behaviours are accepted for boys but not for girls.
The abovementioned theories were used to inform the qualitative inquiry as useful analytical tool. Accordingly, the researcher viewed learners as active participants in the construction of gender roles and identities.

**METHOD**

This qualitative study produced descriptions and explanations of violent behaviour in schools based on the perceptions and experiences of learners. The study followed a community-centred capacity-building approach. Community-centred capacity building refers to the creation of infrastructure, programme maintenance and sustainability but also problem-solving capability among individuals, organisations and groups in the community (Phiri, Hendricks & Seedat, 2012). This approach encourages learner participation in the construction of knowledge and in decision making as members of the school community. Since learners have lived experiences of violence, both as perpetrators and as victims, their participation in theory making about the causes and impact of violence in their specific school community may enhance the effectiveness of violence intervention programmes (Crawford-Browne & Kaminer, 2012). In this study, learner involvement allowed the researcher to get to the ‘truth’ of violence in schools as seen by the key participants who were encouraged to share their experiences, their points of view, and their concerns regarding violence in their schools. Furthermore, the researcher located herself within an interpretive paradigm based on the theories of Neuman (2006) who argues that an interpretive researcher’s goal is to develop an understanding of social life and to discover how people construct meaning in natural settings.

**SELECTION OF SCHOOLS**

Twenty-four (24) schools were selected as follows. Four secondary schools were selected from each of the following six provinces: North West, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. Two schools in each province were located in a rural area and two were located in townships. Initially, a shortlist of possible information-rich schools was compiled based on anecdotal evidence of violent incidences garnered from media reports and conversations with ‘critical friends’ (teachers, principals, ward managers, school governors, etc.). Thereafter, the four most conveniently located schools in each province with respect to access by the research team were selected. Rural schools were quintile one schools, lacked sanitation and running water, were under-resourced and faced challenges of poverty, HIV/AIDS and unemployment. Township schools were in the middle quintile which meant they represented an average socioeconomic group and were not elitist. The inclusion of urban and rural schools ensured that learners’ views were equally represented in the study, irrespective of their geographical location.
SAMPLING OF PARTICIPANTS

Purposive sampling was used in the study to select the participants. The participants were selected based on their relevance to the topic under study (Babbie, 2007) and on anecdotal evidence of violent incidences. For homogeneity purposes, in each school the Life Orientation teacher suggested learners who had perpetrated violence or learners who had been victims of violence, based on school records. Learners were also given a chance to suggest participants as they knew each other far better than the teacher did, and in most instances this kind of violence is not reported to the teacher. Furthermore, if participants perceived each other as fundamentally similar, they would spend less time explaining themselves to each other and more time discussing the issue at hand (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2011). Participants were aged between 13 and 17 years.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Focus group interviews were used to collect data from learners. An average of ten participants (five boys and five girls) participated in each focus group discussion to ensure diversity of views. De Vos et al. (2011) assert that focus groups are a powerful means of exposing reality and of investigating complex behaviour and motivation. In these groups, learners were allowed to speak freely about their thoughts and feelings about violence in their schools and to give suggestions about what can be done to make schools safe (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Two focus group meetings were conducted in each school across the six provinces selected to allow in-depth discussions with participants and to increase validity of the research findings (De Vos et al., 2011). Prior arrangements were made with the school principals to ensure that classroom disruptions were minimised. The focus group interviews were conducted in a comfortable, private venue at school and lasted one to two hours. To create a warm and friendly environment and to put participants at ease, the researcher held small talk with them prior to the commencement of the discussions (De Vos et al., 2011). The researcher ensured that the discussions between the participants were focused and not dominated by one individual. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcribers proficient in the vernacular of the participants per province or area were used to transcribe the recordings and translate them from the target language used into English. Cognisance was taken of possible problems created by translation regarding validity or reliability of the data collected. Therefore, the accuracy of the data transcribed and translated was meticulously checked by the research team.

Thereafter, data were analysed qualitatively. This involved preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper into understanding the data, and interpreting the bigger meaning of the data (Creswell, 2003). Thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) was undertaken to identify themes about certain patterns of thought,
experience or behaviour, and to explain these in terms of how they address the research questions.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical requirements for research were observed in this study. The researcher obtained permission from the Department of Education in the different provinces and ethical clearance from a South African university. Information sheets were provided on research aims, processes and use of data, and consent forms were provided and completed by the school, parents and participants. The participants’ dignity, privacy and confidentiality and right to withdraw or to refuse to answer particular questions without penalty were respected at all times. Researchers explained their research role and stressed that they were not police or government officials. Therefore, participants were free to share whatever information they wanted to share with the researchers. In situations where participants were likely to be traumatised through relating distressing experiences, free psychological counselling was offered by the Department of Education’s district-based psychological services personnel. Prior agreement was sought from the latter that, if such an event occurred, a participant could be referred to them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following themes emerged from the thematic content analysis of learners' self-reports of violence in their schools: types of violence, power relations, management of violence and bullying.

TYPES OF VIOLENCE

Violence is a multifaceted phenomenon and takes place in different forms. The following types of violence were reported in the study: psychological violence, sexual violence and physical violence.

PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

Most girl participants indicated that female teachers spoke in a derogatory language and they perceived this as humiliating, especially when in front of their peers. Leach and Humphreys (2007) maintain that female teachers prefer verbal chastisement to caning. Girls reported feeling demeaned and worthless. One learner said:

“There are some teachers who call us these nasty words like bitch because of our short skirts.” (North West learner)
One could argue that this kind of comment about girls’ appearance could set a limit for their gender by conveying gender-based expectations for behaviour and dress. Learners spend much of their lives at school and as a result, teachers have many opportunities to influence gender socialisation. Female teachers’ construction of girls’ gender is often influenced by their own cultural socialisation. Society expects girls to behave in a particular manner and teachers may ridicule learners who behave in a manner inconsistent with their assigned role in society.

It is interesting to note that boys also disapproved of girls wearing short skirts. Here are some of their statements:

“I think the females, I think they also contribute to this harassment because you can find a girl with a skirt that barely covers her and they expect a guy to just walk past and not do anything. Now is it appropriate to wear a two-inch long skirt?” (North West learner)

“I'm not encouraging, just saying it's wrong to wear something that short. To answer you, some people can't handle themselves. Ja, they have feelings. Like this girl, look at her when she walks, she is sexy. When you see her skirt, her ass actually, not actually, but some, so to us, nè, some peeps we can’t control ourselves. We get excited.” (Gauteng learner)

The above statements indicate that boys want girls to conform to certain gender stereotypes; short skirts are seen as bad and deviant of the gender norm. Dunne, Humphreys and Leach (2006) posit that schools are institutions where feminine and masculine identities are constructed and reinforced. Gender roles are defined and protected in schools. According to Radojkovic (2007), these constructions by boys are used as a means of keeping girls under control. These constructions uphold the normative patriarchal gender order in the school and society. Culturally, girls are expected to wear longer dresses; short skirts at school are perceived as unacceptable and inappropriate. Thorne (1993) points out that while most often males are bullied about their sexuality; females are mostly bullied about their apparent ‘loose morals’. A short skirt is perceived by boys as ‘being loose’, ideas that are informed by the patriarchal values in society.

In addition, teacher-learner interaction is important for effective teaching and learning. The results of the study also showed that teachers’ interaction with learners may contribute to an increased level of gender-based violence in schools. According to Saltmarsh et al. (2012), power operates through discourse and individuals negotiate the power relations that exist through their location within a particular discourse. In most classroom contexts, teachers
are in control and expect learners to follow their instructions. The classroom context, by its
nature and the discourse within it, puts the teacher in the position of power. In many cases,
teachers abuse those powers. Learners said:

“It’s from teachers who swear at learners and in an inappropriate way like calling
names and shouting and things.” (North West learner)

“The first thing, some teachers are being rude to you. They don’t talk to you nicely. They swear. They talk about your parents. So it’s like you do one mistake like
making noise, she won’t say keep quiet. Normally she would say like wrong things,
like swear at you and use big words [swearing words].” (Mpumalanga learner)

Through their behaviour, teachers model ‘appropriate’ gender roles for learners. As Ruiz
(2004) mentions, teachers should be perceived as moral mediators who promote the personal
growth of their students. Jacobs, Gawe and Vakalisa (2011) maintain that teachers should
display a positive work ethic and appropriate values, and conduct themselves in a manner
which benefits, enhances and develops the teaching profession. Leach and Humphreys
(2007) argue that teachers’ psychological violence towards learners is a misuse of power.
Teachers are in loco parentis whereby parents delegate the duty of care to the teachers.
However, many teachers abuse that power. In turn, according to social-learning theory, this
may translate in violent behaviour on the part of learners who model teacher behaviour.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The study reported that sexual violence occurred among both girls and boys. Girls reported
unwelcomed groping by boys in the school as illustrated by the following comments:

“That guy, he touched my behind, and then that felt really uncomfortable and I went
and told my brother and he wanted to hit him with a scissor. We went to the office
spoke to the teachers but they just leave him.” (Limpopo learner)

“Many boys are doing it to girls. They try to touch our bums but when you’re telling
them to stop they say they are going to kill us or something.” (KZN learner).

“A girl was forced to kiss a boy. The more the girl learner refused to kiss the boy, the
violence intensified.” (Mpumalanga learner)

“Boys force girls to fight without wearing their underwear.” (Gauteng learner)
Thus, the boys in this study often forced girls to carry out demeaning acts and thus violate their human dignity. As a result girls were embarrassed and ashamed with some avoiding school, resulting in a negative effect on their education. According to Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, Levin, Ratsaka and Schreiber (2001), unequal power relations in society subject women to inferior positions in which they are dominated by men. Leach (2008) concurs that violence originates in the imbalance of power between males and females, in the gendered hierarchy and separation of tasks, and in socially accepted views of what constitutes masculine and feminine behaviour.

Boys stated that some girls encouraged sexual violence, as demonstrated by the following comment:

“Some girls come to school without wearing panties. They sit on your lap. We are men. How are we supposed to feel? It's not good, madam.” (North West learner)

The boys reported that girls’ demeanour in school influenced male reactions towards them. Boys also reported feeling vulnerable and that their rights were violated when girls put them in an awkward position.

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Corporal punishment is still used as a form of discipline in some schools, regardless of its illegality in South African schools. Bower (2008) stresses that corporal punishment persists as a common disciplinary practice in many schools. The results of this study revealed that punishment in schools often manifests itself in gendered ways, as corporal punishment is mostly administered by male teachers in the school. In the morning, male teachers will wait for latecomers at the gate with canes or sticks. The use of corporal punishment by male teachers reflects deeply entrenched beliefs about acceptable forms of discipline. These male teachers do not see anything wrong in the administration of corporal punishment as a result of their own socialisation. A report of the South African Council of Educators (SACE) (2011) indicates that unless teachers have been educated about gender and power issues, they are likely to model behaviour that reflects their own experiences and those of the broader community. Men are conceived as brave and strong and therefore tasks that require physical strength are delegated to them.

The results of the study also revealed that teacher violence towards learners could be the result of teacher stress. According to one learner:

“The teacher takes out his anger on the learner. He came to him because he was laughing and he beat him with his hands on the head.” (Mpumalanga learner)
Teachers do not know how to deal with their own stress; as a result they use learners as punching bags. They lack alternative means of disciplining learners and this exacerbates their stress. Causes of teacher stress range from school violence, domestic problems or working conditions. Many teachers also come from a background where violence is the customary means of conflict resolution (SACE, 2011).

Moreover, learners indicated that when they reported corporal punishment at school to their parents, the latter told them that they too were beaten at school and thus justified the practice. Parents’ responses could be associated with their socialisation; they believe that ‘if you spare the rod, you spoil the child’. In this way violence among communities is ‘normalised’ under the guise of discipline.

Boys were often reported to be physically violent towards girls and towards their peers. This could be the result of their social orientation as normative masculinity is implicated in physical violence. Dominant gender norms dictate that boys should address disputes with peers through physical violence. Radojkovic (2007) argued that gender roles imposed on boys by society limit their ability to express their masculinity in a positive way. Boys do not want to be seen as cowards; they want to gain the attention of their peers and to be regarded as heroes and thus validate their masculinity through violent behaviour.

It is interesting to note that physical and verbal violence was also reported amongst the girls. Girls were violent towards each other and, in some instances, towards teachers. Here are some comments from girls regarding physical violence:

“She is saying that she ended up beating that person because that person was saying and harassing her and she ended up getting really angry and then she was forced to beat that person”. (Limpopo learner)

“If it happens, if they are playing a game of tins and that person hit her badly with the ball, she is going to run after the person and hit her badly”. (Western Cape learner)

The above quotes showed that girls also engage in fighting. Traditionally, girls are perceived as victims and the dominant understanding of femininity does not associate girls with violence (Leach & Humphreys, 2007). The gendered role of girls requires them to behave like ‘ladies’. However, the engagement of girls in physical violence indicates the differences in gender roles where not all women conform to stereotyped roles. In addition, girls challenged teachers’ authority; with this often constituting ‘open defiance’ on the part of girls who did not accept teachers’ violence passively.
POWER RELATIONS

The school, by its nature, has structured asymmetrical power relations which promote the levels of gender violence. Teachers are automatically given power through their positions and often use their power to abuse learners. One learner said:

“It means you have to be quiet. You have to obey whatever they say is right. I’m not saying we shouldn’t – we should, but they should learn to accommodate everyone and not try to accommodate themselves only.” (North West learner)

Teachers are tasked to care and protect children but they often betray their duty of care by abusing their learners. Learners reported that they do not have a say in classroom life. Teachers in many instances still dominate and dictate activities in the classroom. Bowers (1987) contends that domination of this kind limits the consciousness of individuals in a manner that causes them to adopt a passive attitude towards the conditions of their existence. One learner said:

“Last year this teacher discouraged me and said, ‘Oh, you have no future in this stream’.” (Gauteng learner)

Consequently, learners regard themselves as ‘dull or failures’ and do not add value to their situation. This further encouraged them to engage in violent activities on and outside the school premises. According to Freire (1972), one needs to develop a critical awareness of one’s own situation, which empowers one to liberate oneself from the domination. It could be argued that learners need to be taught to be active and strive to liberate themselves through participating in decisions to improve their circumstances, which would also give learners a sense of their own worth and control.

MANAGEMENT OF VIOLENCE

The study results revealed poor management of violence in schools. Teachers themselves feared retribution and did not want to be victimised. The people who shoulder the responsibility for creating a protective school environment for children often do not know how to support gender equality or create a violence-free school culture. The following are quotes from learners regarding reporting violent activities in the school:

“Teachers cannot deal with violence at school because they are also afraid to be victimised.” (Western Cape learner)
“This could be the results that just like learners, they are members of the community so they do not want to be victims as some of the learners might attack them after school or during weekends.” (Limpopo learner)

“Last time when I was fighting with the other boys, I was just going to the class and they said, ‘What do you want?’ and I said, ‘I just want to talk to my friend’. And they slapped me and the whole class, they used to beat me and I will go to the teachers and tell them that I just wanted to give a pen to my friend because I did not have mine and they said I was wrong to go to that class and I was not being good.” (North West learner)

“Educators are unable to get through to the learners because like I’m indicating in terms of violence. They are afraid of being victimised outside the office or they get outside of the school yard. That’s where the results start because you don’t know what happened.” (Western Cape learner)

The comments illustrate that reporting violence to teachers and/or the principal is generally ineffective. Learners indicated that when they reported violence to the principal and teachers, they were ignored or dismissed and no measures were taken towards the perpetrators. The following quotes captured learners’ views:

“We asked for Madam to see the principal. She said the principal is busy with the parents and all those stuff. I then asked to see the deputy principal. They kicked us out of the office and said he doesn’t have time for us. I think that unless there is a fight, if I fight that guy, they will maybe take me serious.” (Mpumalanga learner)

This is in line with Dunne’s (2009) view that teachers do not see gender as an issue; instead they have internalised local norms and rarely question them. As a result, they do not intervene in issues of gender, harassment or abuse issues in the classroom.

**BULLYING**

Bullying is the most common form of violence in schools. Banks (2014) argued that learners who engaged in bullying behaviour seem to have a need to feel powerful and in control. Bullying reflects an imbalance of power. According to Dunne (2009), bullying is frequently gendered due to the way it is expressed. In this study, it became apparent that teachers were also victims of bullying. The following are the learners’ comments regarding bullying perpetrated against teachers:

“Teachers are afraid of bully learners.” (North West learner)
“Female teachers are sometimes harassed by both boys and girls.” (Gauteng learner)

“Especially lady teachers are victims. Even girls as well, they are very rude … making it very difficult for teachers to manage the class.” (Mpumalanga learner)

According to Saltmarsh et al. (2012), the phenomenon of violence between students and teachers is poorly understood. Violence perpetrated by learners towards teachers could be seen as retaliation, an ‘enough is enough campaign’ to say to teachers ‘we deserve better treatment’. Learners felt that they needed to protect their dignity from teacher infraction; hence they engage in violent behaviour against their teachers.

In particular, female teachers were bullied by boys. One could argue that boys’ behaviour towards their female teachers was associated with their socialisation. Constructions of masculinity seem to increase the risk of boys engaging in school-based violence. Where society regards women as ‘weak’, it is not easy for boys to take orders from the female teacher. Boys’ performances of masculinity are an attempt to subordinate female teachers according to the gender order in school and society. This challenges female teachers’ authority and position in the school hierarchy (Dunne et al., 2006). However, girls have also been found to bully teachers, particularly female teachers who as women are perceived as ‘soft’ targets. Girls thus themselves may challenge the gender roles prescribed by society. This is affirmed by Van Leeuwen (2008) who has indicated that teachers are also at risk of school violence, with constructions of teachers as perpetrators increasing the rates of violence targeted at teachers.

Enactments of power and socially constructed values and beliefs translate into serious gender-based violence in schools. MSI (2008) noted that school-related gender-based violence does take place in a context of gender inequality and specific cultural beliefs and attitudes about gender. Learners experience and perpetuate violence according to their social orientation and the dynamics of power relations that exist in their communities.

**CONCLUSION**

In tackling gender violence in schools, a holistic and multifaceted school approach involving school management, teachers, learners and the curriculum is necessary to ensure that social and behavioural messages are consistent and reinforced by teachers and learners alike. Schools have a critical role to play in taking the lead in addressing gender-based violence as they can reach the at-risk learner population at an early age by teaching positive morals and values. The school curriculum can also be influential in establishing
a non-violent ethos in the school. In the South African context, Life Skills as a compulsory subject can be used to teach learners about conflict management and prepare learners for current and future challenges. Furthermore, teachers are key instruments for change. However, they have their own experiences as gendered beings. Dynamics of gender-based violence emanate from an understanding of gender as socially constructed. Practices within multiple socialisation sources have different powers and authority and thus describe roles and functions in the community. To play an effective role in addressing gender-based violence, teachers need to understand and confront their own attitudes and experiences regarding gender and violence. Given that some teachers are perpetrators of abuse, and others may be victims of abuse, it is important that strategies to address gender violence in schools acknowledge and address teachers’ experiences as well as those of learners to encourage constructive and collaborative relationships. In this regard, the teacher training curriculum should prepare teachers for such a role. Using these various strategies, schools can be effectively transformed into places of safety and learning and into environments where young people feel protected, appreciated and nurtured.

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REFERENCES


Conference report

African Forum for Urban Safety, UN-Habitat conference: Inaugural AFUS learning exchange, 29 June to 1 July 2016, Durban, South Africa

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In response to a number of summits calling for an integrated approach to ensuring urban safety on the African continent, the African Forum for Urban Safety (AFUS), with the support of United Nations-Habitat (UN-Habitat), was launched in December 2015 with the mandate of promoting inclusive, safer habitable areas for all citizens and visitors to the continent’s cities (UN-Habitat, n.d.). The subsequent AFUS, UN-Habitat conference, on which this paper is reporting, was held at the Durban International Convention Centre with the purpose of launching a learning exchange between cities across the African continent.

The aim of the conference was for sharing of best, evidence-based practised, key lessons learnt, and a synthesis of different approaches used for advancing and promoting urban safety in Africa. The theme of this exchange was, “Towards Collective Action for Creation of Safer Cities Vision 2030” (African Forum for Urban Safety (AFUS) Learning Exchange, n.d.). Cities from a number of countries across the African continent were represented, including South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Ivory Coast, Senegal and Burkina Faso. There was also an international presence with representatives from Microsoft, SafetiPIN (New Delhi, India), and Tallus (France) sharing their work in technological applications for monitoring urban safety.

Day one included a note from the deputy mayor of Dakar, Senegal, as well as keynotes from a number of African delegates. Prof Sipho Seepe, advisor to the Minister of Human Settlements in South Africa, delivered a note on how the implications of our colonial and apartheid history are still being suffered by South Africans through both material and spiritual displacement, especially by the poor and vulnerable citizens of our country. He further spoke about the need to rewrite our history to include our own African-centered narratives. Prof Seepe used a very powerful story of the hunter and the lion being hunted. He said as long as we tell the story from the hunter’s point of view, the hunter will always be glorified. He ended by stating that safety must be engineered and co-produced by a wide range of stakeholders in order to ensure sustainable solutions.

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Dr Alioune Badiane, the Director of Programme Division, UN-Habitat, spoke about the key issue of rapid urbanisation and the challenges this presents. He spoke about the need to elevate safety concerns and initiatives as well as concerns about violence across the African continent (e.g., Boko Haram, xenophobia in South Africa, etc.). He raised the issue of gender violence and how we cannot exclude this from our dialogues around safety. Using examples from Latin America, he suggested how we could draw from experiences in these cities, and emphasised the need to learn from each other and exchange knowledge and solutions. He ended off by stating that we need not reinvent the wheel when these best practices already exist.

The first part of day one included presentations on urban safety and the profiling of safety risks from the South African Cities Network, eThekwini Municipality and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). An important highlight was the launch of the Urban Safety Report prepared by the South African Cities Network. The second part of day one featured presentations from Microsoft, SafetiPin, Tallus and the South African Medical Research Council-University of South Africa’s Violence, Injury and Peace Research Unit on the use of i-technology (internet-based technology), mobile applications, and data collection and statistical methodology for urban safety indicator development. Day one ended off with a thought-provoking presentation by the presenter for West Africa Democracy Radio on the role of the media in public violence, how violent acts are portrayed in the media, and how the media can contribute to crime prevention. Feedback from the floor highlighted the need to institute government structures that will verify data and that all stakeholders should safeguard against technological companies that are simply partnering with the objective of profit-making. A call was also made for ensuring a sustainability plan in resource-poor settings.

Day two started with a morning session in which Microsoft presented on urban safety strategies and how these are implemented. Case studies were presented from the Nairobi Safe Cities Initiatives, Kenya and Abidjan, Ivory Coast on their urban safety promotion strategies, key lessons learnt and recommendations for the way forward. Day three, the last day of the proceedings, focused on summarising the key lessons and recommendations drawn from the week’s presentations and mapping a way forward for African urban safety and security. This review was followed by more case studies from Dakar, Senegal, Nelson Mandela Bay, South Africa, and the City of Johannesburg, South Africa on their urbanisation policies and strategies, specifically their Urban Renewal and Safety and Peace Programmes. Dr Alioune Badiane ended off the discussions by showing a picture of the African continent taken from outer space (‘Africa at Night’) that represented the darkness of our continent compared to the rest of the world. This image signified how Africa is not prepared for the rapid urbanisation it is experiencing and that cities without
sufficient light equals unsafe spaces for its citizens. He expressed the resistance of most African countries to urbanisation policies and strategies and the challenges presented by urbanisation including slums, a backlog on the provision of urban basic services, and the tendency toward urban sprawl. He used Rwanda and Ethiopia as examples of countries that implemented bold strategies in anticipation of rapid urbanisation. He ended off by stating that urbanisation models and strategy planning is not a ‘one-size-fits-all’ and that each country should devise their own strategies.

Dr Badiane’s address was followed by a panel discussion by various national and international experts on urban safety. The main messages that emerged were that we need to change our language and how we speak of those at risk. Instead of calling women and youth vulnerable, we should use language that does not infer some inherent vulnerability. Women and youth/children are not vulnerable or weak within themselves, they are strong women, youth/children placed in vulnerable conditions. Finally, interventions and strategies that we use must be participatory and in agreement with the community and our work towards safer cities should also consider a human rights lens.

The final session was a practical one in which delegates broke into smaller groups to draw up the key lessons learnt from the entire week and to discuss which are priority areas for urban safety and possible strategies for safety promotion. The practical session was followed by a review of the proceedings and the key themes that emerged which included: 1) the need for verifiable data and data gathering tools; 2) the use of technology and mobile applications; 3) the importance of stakeholder engagement and a participatory approach; 4) collaboration and partnerships; 5) capacity building; 6) dissemination of knowledge and knowledge exchange. The conference was concluded by the conference secretariat assuring the delegation that a working document or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) would be drawn up that summarises the learning exchange and lessons learnt as well as a map for the way forward. This document will be circulated to all delegates for any amendments and signing if all are in agreement with the formulated plan. The key resonating message for the writer was that we are one continent, separated from our neighbours by imaginary lines and borders. In ending, we should learn from each other and work together towards an African continent that is safe and inclusive for all its inhabitants.

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