Monitoring School Violence in Israel, National Studies and Beyond:

Implications for Theory, Practice, and Policy

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Abstract

This chapter describes an ongoing study of school violence that consists of a series of waves of national data collection in Israel. The chapter presents the unique methodological characteristics of the study including its large, representative, and nested sample, extensive and detailed instruments for multiple constituents (students, teachers and principals) and multilevel analyses. The overall focus is on monitoring of school violence and climate and the continuous feedback to help use this information to prevent school violence. The chapter presents several examples of the ways in which a national monitoring study impacted the professional and public discourse. Finally, the chapter describes how a national study based on a sample led to a monitoring system that is implemented in all primary and junior-high schools. This unique system integrates monitoring of academic outcomes and school climate and violence. The implications of these developments for school reform and continuous improvement are discussed.

Key words: School violence, monitoring, school climate, victimization, bullying

Monitoring School Violence in Israel, National Studies and Beyond:

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This chapter presents the National Study of School Violence in Israel, conducted by the authors. The study has many implications for research and policy making in the area of school violence relevant for many other countries and contexts. The aim of this chapter is to review the study while explicating its relevance to theory, practice, and policy.

Israel National Study of School Violence

This chapter describes an ongoing study that consists of a series of waves of data collection. The first wave was conducted in the Fall of 1998 and the last carried out by the authors in Spring 2005. A follow up wave was collected by an independent arm of the Israeli Ministry of Education in 2009, but the results are not yet public. Each of these waves utilized similar methodology and instruments, although slight modifications were used each year to respond to emerging needs.

This study is different than many other studies on school violence because it assumes that violence trends have the potential for continual change over time and need to be monitored on a regular basis. Many studies focus on a single historical timeframe and generalize their conclusions over time. The concept of monitoring assumes that research should function much like a social feedback system that continually responds to current and emerging needs. Monitoring is very similar to the public health concept of "surveillance" used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In the United States, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (CDC, 2010) is an example of such efforts at the national level. Hence, these studies ought to be considered as a national "snapshot" that should be taken regularly in order to assess and understand change. These kinds of national studies are seen as a source of empirical findings to

inform policy and practice on the regional and national level; however, these types of studies do not inform policy at the local school site level (Benbenishty, Astor & Zeira, 2003).

This study is unique methodologically in several important ways. It is based on a very large national random sample of schools nested in their communities. The questionnaire is extensive and deals with multiple forms of victimization, perpetration, and bystander behaviors. Within schools, there are parallel surveys that sample students, teachers, and principals. Israel is the only country to have such an ongoing comprehensive, nested, and large scale national study entirely devoted to issues of school safety. The following sections outline some of the study's specific design issues that may be of interest to any country considering developing similar national studies.

Sample

The samples used over the years were designed to represent all schools, students, teachers and principals in grades 4–11 in the official public school system supervised by the Israeli Ministry of Education. The authors' theoretical focus of "students within schools" (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005) necessitated having a representative sample of all public schools in Israel that was large enough to allow for school-level analyses. Further, it was important to obtain representative samples of students and teachers from each of these schools. Therefore, the probability sampling method used was a two-stage stratified cluster sample. In the first stage, schools were selected randomly from the sampling frame according to their appropriate strata and their relative size. In the second stage of sampling, one or two classes were randomly selected from each of the grade levels in the selected schools (in 2002 and 2005 two classes from two different grade levels were sampled randomly from each school).

The sample strata reflected theoretical and policy questions, and thus changed over the

years to focus on student populations that were seen of special interest. In 1998 and 1999 the strata were: Jewish (religious and nonreligious)/Arab, and Primary/Junior High/High school. In 2002, following alarming findings in previous waves, a sub-sample of Bedouin students was added to the study, and in 2005 the Druz students were added as a sub-sample in order to more clearly distinguish between groups of minority students..

Because these national studies were supported by the Ministry of Education and major efforts were made to ensure participation, response rates were very high. In 2005, the response rate among schools was about 95.3%, and the response level among the students in these schools was about 95%. Sampling of homeroom teachers changed over the years. In 1999, all homeroom teachers were sampled in the relevant grade levels (response rate of approximately 60%). In 2002, only the homeroom teachers of the classes participated (591 with a response rate of approximately 68%). In 2005, we enhanced the sample and added a random sample of 1880 teachers whose students did not participate in the survey. Based on our previous experiences we improved our procedures, tightened supervision of data collection, and collaborated more closely with the Ministry. Consequently, we were able to increase the response rate of teachers from about 60% to 79% of the target sample. The response rate among principals also improved from 66% in 2002 to 76% in 2005. The sample sizes for students, teachers and principals in each of the study years are presented in Table 1.

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Instruments

Student Survey: The questionnaires used were an adaptation of the research version of the

California School Climate & Safety Survey (Furlong, 1996; Furlong, Morrison, Bates, & Chung, 1998; Rosenblatt & Furlong, 1997; for a recent short form see Furlong et al. 2005). The survey was modified to the Israeli context and to address issues of interest to the researchers. Questionnaires were developed in Hebrew and Arabic with a shorter version for primary school students and a longer one for secondary schools. Changes were made following each of the studies to respond to new needs and issues raised by previous findings. For instance, we added questions to assess staff victimization and sexual harassment among primary school students. In each of the data collection waves, the research instrument contained more than 100 questions pertaining to several areas: (a) personal victimization by peers, (b) weapons in school, (c) personal victimization by staff, (d) risky peer and staff behaviors in school, (e) feelings and assessments regarding school violence, and (f) school climate.

Principals Survey: The principals' questionnaire was designed specifically for this study and included the following sections: (a) school policies and coping with violence; (b) school climate relevant to violence; (c) report on violent acts in the last month and assessment of the seriousness of the problem; (d) interventions and projects implemented to deal with school violence in the last two years; (e) training needs; (f) relationships with and support from others in the school (e.g., counselors) and out of the school (e.g., the police, the central district office); and (h) background information on the school and its staff (such as turnover rates).

Teachers Survey: The teachers responded to a questionnaire that was very similar to the one used with the principals. The questionnaire also included a section on the teachers' feelings and behaviors regarding their own personal safety in the school.

School context information: Our theoretical model of "School in Context" (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005) emphasizes various aspects of the students and their families, school characteristics,

and community contexts. The study therefore integrated databases from the Ministry of Education, the National Statistics Bureau, and the police. These sources provided aggregated information on school characteristics such as number of classes and students. It also provided aggregated data on the families of the students, such as percentages of low-income families, low education (under eight years of school), family size, and an aggregated SES score for the students' families. Based on each school's census tracts, we included a range of school neighborhood characteristics such as income, education, employment, family size, ethnic/religious heterogeneity, and heterogeneity in terms of new immigrants versus native Israelis. The police database was used to obtain rates and types of crimes in the school's neighborhood.

The Implications of Conducting a National Study of School Violence: Creating a Common Ground for Establishing Priorities

Commitment to Monitor School Violence

When examining the implications and the impact of a study, there is often a focus on the effects of its findings on policy, practice, and training. Indeed, as shown later, the findings of this study had such implications. However, it is important to point out that the Israeli National Study of School Violence had a valuable impact on Israeli society and the educational system because *it was conducted*. The financial investment made by the Ministry of Education was nontrivial. Furthermore, the superintendents of Israeli schools, the Ministers of Education, the Chief Scientist Office, and all regional supervisors made a strong commitment to the study and worked hard to ensure high levels of involvement by all in the educational establishment. These central government efforts sent a very strong signal to the educational system that collecting accurate information to address school violence was a priority. Over time, the Ministry developed means

of examining the findings and creating forums to discuss their implications. Therefore, in some ways, the decision to actually collect comprehensive data for the purposes of dealing with these problems started a chain reaction that lead to more substantive changes, and to a dramatic increase in awareness and prevention activities.

The Ministry of Education is now committed to conduct these comprehensive national studies of school violence every 2-3 years. The 2005 study has been replicated in 2008-2009 by an arm of the Ministry that intends to continue this national-level monitoring. Moreover, since 2005, questions from the national monitoring study have been integrated into the ongoing yearly national-level monitoring of school violence at the district- and school-site levels. This chapter will later detail how the ideas of monitoring can have a major impact on the ways schools and districts address issues of school violence.

Empirical Findings as a Basis for Public and Professional Discourse

In the years since 1998, the findings of the studies have provided a very detailed picture of school violence in Israel. The country now has data on a large number of behaviors in detail for many cultural groups and subgroups, across gender, age, and school types. In our interactions with educators from all levels, we have noted a strong shift from a dynamic of debating personal theories, hunches, and case "examples" to examining representative figures and findings. This is an important progress toward continuous school improvement based on local empirical data (Bernhardt, 2004). The focus on systematic data was also clearly evident in the media. Invariably, when an extremely violent act was reported in the media, it became customary for media outlets to approach the researchers residing in Israel and interview them with regard to that event. The authors infused into the public discussion nationally representative research findings that gave the public an accurate scope of the problem. This helped limit (but not

eliminate) over-generalizations made from single cases that were presented in the media. Among the many examples of the impact of having relevant national findings, several topics are illustrated below.

Different forms of victimization needing unique explanations and strategies. Many studies of school violence focus exclusively on bullying behaviors (e.g., Nansel et al., 2001). The Israeli study incorporated a more expansive definition of violence in schools to account for a much wider range of types of school victimization, including verbal violence, exclusion, verbal threats, physical violence (ranging from minor pushing and shoving to needing medical attention due to injuries in a fight), sexual harassment, and staff-initiated emotional, physical and sexual maltreatment. Primary school students reported on their experiences with 25-30 different types of victimization and secondary school students reported on 35-40 (depending on the data collection wave). To our knowledge, no other single study encompasses such a wide range of issues. Periodic compendiums of school violence indicators (e.g., Dinkes, Kemp, & Baum, 2009) summarize findings of several different studies, and are therefore unable to identify patterns and interrelationships among different forms of victimization.

The choice to include a wide range of behaviors had many implications. First, the students' reports of such a wide range of victimization types provided a very rich and detailed picture of what it means to be a student in an Israeli school, and how these experiences differ by gender, cultural and ethnic group, and whether the school is elementary, junior high or high school.

Further, the wide range of behaviors included in the study provided a rare opportunity to examine questions surrounding the *structure* of the different types of victimization (i.e., the relationships among the many victimization types), and how similar or different these structures

are among the various groups (culture, age, gender). Several surprising empirical findings

emerged. One such major finding is that for all cultures and age groups (including replications

with large samples in California), the frequencies of victimization behaviors tend to be rank

ordered exactly the same, with very minor variations across many contexts. That is, certain

behaviors tended to be the most frequent among all groups (e.g., verbal insults), while other

forms of violence were the rarest in all groups (e.g., cutting a student with a knife). This pattern

has important implications for both theory and practice since it means that school violence

behaviors are structured similarly despite different base rates across contexts and countries. It

also suggests that behaviors that are "outliers" (i.e., do not conform to the universal ranking) may

hold clues about those cultures and how they perceive and react to that particular type of school

violence behavior. Thus, for instance, social boycott of students in Israel had very different

meaning and rank-order for Jewish and Arab students, reflecting a different cultural meaning of

such social behaviors. This line of inquiry yielded many helpful insights that are discussed in

detail elsewhere (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005).

     Situating the scope of the problem and its increase or decrease. The heightened

awareness of school violence fueled at least partially by the findings in the first wave of the

national study increased the sensitivity to school violence incidents. Hence, when educators and

the general public were asked in newspapers polls whether school violence was on the rise, for

most the answer was clear: "Yes, and without a doubt." This was also the researchers'

experience in many public forums. The general public's perception of an increase in school

violence rates was likely due to the increased media reporting of violent events.

     In this context, the empirical findings had a very important role in the public debate. To

counter the public intuition that violence was on a steep rise, data were continuously presented to

show that for most forms of violence, there was a marked decrease in student peer victimization. This research was able to show that the general public subjective views were not "in sync" with the reports and perceptions of youth that attend schools. Most students reported that violence in their schools dropped when compared to prior years. These findings were used extensively in internal discussions in the Ministry of Education and were also brought to all public discussions of school violence, including in the Knesset (the Israeli parliament). Ironically, since the 1998 initial study, Israel has had significant reductions in school violence across most groups and categories. The media regularly reports the findings of the national studies but does not situate them in the context of reduction. Hence, the general public sees many case studies and finding reported by the media and tends to believe that the rates are going up rather than going down sharply.

Situating the problem of students harming teachers. Given the media portrayal of large numbers of students beating up teachers across the country, teachers were asked about their feelings of personal safety in school and to what extent students and parents victimized them. Overall, the findings indicated that very few of the teachers were physically attacked (many more were verbally abused), and such reports of teacher victimization were decreasing over the years. Indeed, it appeared that the media blitzes helped create public "hysteria" surrounding the lack of moral values in youth.

During this period, the researchers made a focused effort to encourage public discussion of the findings obtained from the teachers themselves (rather than a media campaign). The data and discourse provided an objective source for the public to understand the scope of the problem, the grades most heavily impacted, which ethnic and religious groups' teachers were most victimized (e.g., the very high concern for personal safety among Bedouin teachers and the low

concern among Jewish Religious teachers), and the extent of this problem when juxtaposed with other more pressing issues of school violence. These discussions helped to provide the public with a more cogent and data driven understanding of what was needed to support teachers.

Situating the problem of staff harming students. Staff behaviors have an important impact on students, both positively and negatively. Victimization by staff may impact students even more negatively than peer violence. The work by Hyman and colleagues attests to the potential harm that educators can cause (e.g., Hyman, 1990; Hyman & Perone, 1998; Hyman & Snook, 2000).

The Israel National Study of School Violence was the first to integrate staff-initiated violence and peer violence in school. The findings of our study made significant contributions to bringing this issue to the public eye. Clearly, staff-initiated victimization of students is not a marginal problem experienced by a negligible proportion of students. As reported elsewhere (Benbenishty, Zeira, & Astor, 2002; Benbenishty, Zeira, Astor, & Khoury-Kassabri, 2002), students perceived to be verbally and emotionally maltreated in significant proportions. For instance, in 2005 one out of three (33.3%) reported that during the last month a teacher mocked, insulted or humiliated him or her, and one of five reported some kind of physical victimization by staff (21.5%). There was disproportional reporting of physical violence by Arab and Bedouin students. For instance, in 2005, whereas 14.7% of the Jewish students reported any type of physical maltreatment by staff, the percentage among Arab students was 38.2%, and among Bedouin students was 43.8%. It is important to note that in most Israeli schools, teachers and students in any specific school are of the same ethnic, cultural background, and religion. Furthermore, our findings indicate that staff physical violence was more prevalent in poor neighborhoods, even when ethnic affiliation was controlled (Benbenishty et al., 2002). These

findings raised many theoretical and practical issues that are discussed in detail elsewhere (e. g.,

Khoury-Kassabri, Astor, & Benbenishty, 2008).

Focusing on the meanings and interpretations of multiple perspectives: Students,

homeroom teachers, and principals. Most of school violence studies focus on students, and only

a few school violence researchers study teachers and principals. This is the first nationally

representative school violence study that includes and *compares* multiple respondents (students,

their teachers, and principals) from the same schools. There are several compelling reasons to

include teachers and principals in school violence studies. Examples from our teachers and

principal sections of the study will illustrate this point.

Teachers were asked about training in the area of school safety. Their early responses

were both informative and alarming. In 2002, less than a quarter of the homeroom teachers said

they had any relevant training during their studies in a college or university (only about a one-

third of them felt it was helpful), two-thirds said they did not participate in any in-service

training on how to deal with school violence, and more than a quarter of them said that they

badly needed training. These findings have clear policy and training implications. In fact, some

teacher colleges developed training material to respond to this expressed need. Interestingly, in

2005, fewer teachers and principals expressed a strong need to participate in training on school

safety (e.g., a drop from 28.3% in 2002 to 17.5% in 2005). This may serve as an indication that

the Ministry training efforts following the research report were actually having an impact on the

workforce.

A second example of the importance of hearing the perspective of staff comes from a

segment in our survey of principals that focused on their relationships with a series of role

partners—parents, support staff, police, supervisors and the district. In two subsequent waves of

data collection, the picture was quite clear—principals felt alone on the front line of dealing with school safety. They felt that most other partners made very little contributions to their efforts to reduce school violence. For instance, in 2005 only 13.2% had positive assessment of the district contribution to their efforts. The group that was seen as most helpful was the pupil personnel support staff in school (i.e., counselors and psychologists). Still, only 41% of the principals felt in 2005 that support staff contributed much or very much to their efforts to reduce school violence and 29% felt they made no contribution or a small one. The authors communicated these findings to all these role partners through multiple channels.

In addition to looking separately at each of the multiple perspectives of the members of the school community, the comparisons (similarities or disparities) among them can contribute significantly to research and policy. From a research perspective, the converging or diverging multiple perspectives of school safety in the same school can help validate (or invalidate) the assessments made by each of the school stake holders.

Findings indicate that the degree of similarity between the three perspectives in the school can be informative as to how the school is functioning. Large gaps and disagreements between staff and students or between a principal and teachers may indicate that the school does not have a shared mission. For instance, if students assess the school as having a serious violence problem and the teachers and principals do not, one would expect that little will be done to address the students' distress. Thus, exploring the gaps between the multiple perspectives can contribute to assessment of schools and the identification of schools that show the highest levels of divergence of perspectives (see Benbenishty & Astor, 2005 for greater details).

Creating a focus on the "school" in school violence. The interplay between context and school violence has not been explored in great detail within the theoretical/empirical literature on

school violence. The investigators made a methodological choice to include schools as units of analysis, in addition to individual students. Most of the research literature on school violence has neglected this analytical perspective and focused almost exclusively on student-level views of school victimization. In some ways this is surprising because most of the school safety intervention literature focuses on school-level programs. In order to understand the dynamics of school victimization, assess the need for school-wide interventions, and examine the outcomes of such programs, it seemed essential to explore victimization from a school unit perspective.

The choice to have the school as a unit of analysis was reflected in (a) the sampling of a large number of schools, each with a large enough number of students to allow reasonable school- level estimates; (b) instruments and data collection that included school level information (e.g., school size, the SES of the school neighborhood); and (c) an analytic plan that included multilevel statistical analyses (HLM, Khoury-Kassabri, Benbenishty, Astor, & Zeira, 2004). This central methodological choice allowed for an exploration of a comprehensive ecological model that examines how school violence relates to both within and outside school contexts.

Using schools as a unit of analysis also allows examination of the distribution of school violence for *schools* (rather than for individual students). To illustrate, an intriguing empirical question is whether the distribution of violence in schools follows a normal distribution, in which a few schools have high levels of violence and a few other schools have very low levels of violence, and the rest are somewhere in the mid range. Or, alternatively, that the distribution is skewed and there are a few schools that have either very high or very low levels of violence that make them stand out as extremes.

This issue has implications for policy and practice. Let us assume that 5% of the students report that another student extorted them. From a policy perspective, there is a major difference

between the following two situations: (a) Most schools have about 5% of the students reporting extortion or (b) In most schools, there are no students reporting extortion and only in a very few schools the levels of extortion are much higher.

This study examined the distribution using (a) a dispersion index that indicates how heterogeneous schools are in terms of their level of violence; and (b) skewness of the distribution, which indicates whether the distribution is normal, or skewed in one direction. A high and positive sign of the skewness index means that there are few schools in which the levels of violence are exceptionally high, and a negative sign indicates that a few schools have very low rates of violence. Upon examination of this dispersion index, it was found that victimization types that were reported more frequently by the students have a lower dispersion index than victimization types that are less frequent and more severe. In other words, schools tend to be more similar to each other with regard to the less severe victimization types but differ much more from each other when it comes to the more severe behaviors.

A positive skew was found for more severe types of violence—there are few schools with very high levels of severe violence. For instance, in 2002 in about a quarter of the schools, there were *no reports* of a student cutting another student with a knife or a sharp object, half of the schools had less than 5% of the students making this report. However, in 5% of the schools, 20% or more of the students reported being cut with a knife or a sharp object, and in 1% of the schools *more than one out of four* students reported being cut by knife or a sharp object.

From a policy perspective, this pattern strongly suggests that efforts to stem extreme and rare types of violence should be directed to a select few schools, rather than spread thin across many schools. This recommendation implies that levels of school violence be assessed in schools and schools be treated differentially, based on their profile in terms of levels and types of

victimization that students experience.

This school-level focus had implications for policy and for further research and theory development. Following the findings regarding the extremely skewed distribution of school violence among schools, the psychological services in conjunction with the districts initiated a process to identify schools that "stand out" in terms of extreme levels of violence, so that they can be the focus of additional supervision and supports. Furthermore, the authors encouraged policy makers to identify schools that present extremely low violence, compared with all other schools that have similar socio-cultural ecological contexts. Thus the focus shifts from identifying individual students at risk, to a more system-level approach that focuses on the school as a unique social context.

From theoretical and research perspectives, these findings led the authors to explore in depth "theoretically atypical" schools. These are schools that have either very low or very high levels of violence compared to what is expected with schools with similar socio-economic and cultural characteristics. The findings of a recent mixed-method study (Astor, Benbenishty, & Estrada, 2009) suggest that organizational variables within these schools may buffer community influences. The most important variable found is the leadership of the principal. These schools emphasize a school reform approach, rather than packaged school violence evidence-based programs. With the principal's inspiration, guidance and support schools which are theoretically atypically low in school violence demonstrate "outward" oriented ideologies, a school wide awareness of violence, consistent procedures, integrated use of cultural and religious symbols, visual manifestations of student care, and the beautification of school grounds.

A Structural Change: From National Studies to National Monitoring System of School Climate

The series of national studies were very important in raising awareness and informing Israeli national policy. Still, these studies were less useful to local schools and communities that did not have any systematic information on school safety issues within their own local settings. School sites could not know how their school compared with the national norm, and therefore did not have the detailed local knowledge required to plan their school safety interventions. The awareness that each school needed local data to proceed properly was an important step in moving from periodic national school violence studies conducted by university researchers to ongoing national monitoring of school climate implemented and required by the Ministry of Education in all schools in Israel.

Israel created more than a decade ago an academic monitoring system - *"Meytzav."* With the *Meytzav*, the academic achievement of students in primary and junior high schools are tested, and detailed information is given to the principals and school staff with the goal of academic improvement. The Meytzav is run by independent governmental agency (associated with the Ministry of Education)—The National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education (*RAMA).* The current *Meytzav* instrument includes a large number of items taken from the previously described national studies of school violence.

Currently, there are bi-annual monitoring versions for students, teachers and principals. The instruments include sections on issues such as school related victimization, safety, connectedness to school, school policies toward violence, staff violence, peer relations, and teacher perceived parental involvement in school. Students respond to paper-based questionnaires administered alongside the academic achievement tests. Teachers and principals are interviewed over the phone. This process is conducted in each school by outside personnel

(supervised by the *RAMA*) every other year. Schools are encouraged to employ the instrument internally during the offset years (for a more detailed description see Astor et al., in press).

It is quite possible that Israel is the only country in the world that collects both academic and social climate information in the same national survey. Having these two domains collected and disseminated to the same schools conveys the important conceptual message that school climate, school safety and academics are integrally associated with one another.

Israel's educational psychological services have made many adjustments over the years to change their mission and take on more responsibilities in the area of school climate and safety. They are using the national study to help design national policies and the school-level *Meytzav* data to work with schools that are having specific safety issues. This involves data interpretation and the ability to suggest services, evidence based programs, and community supports that could build capacity within the school (Astor et al., in press).

Furthermore, the unique national database merging climate and academic information is an important source for ongoing organizational and academic learning. It is being used to study the interrelationships between socio-demographic characteristics of the school's neighborhood and students, school's staff composition, academic and social climate, school safety policies, and academic achievements of students. Currently, for instance, there are studies that examine how school social and academic climate mediate and moderate the effects of the students' and school socio-economic background on their academic achievement. The underlying hypothesis is that school climate and safety have an impact on academics. While this is commonly stated in political and practice circles, it is rarely researched. Now there are powerful data in Israel that can examine the relationships between socio economic student background, school social and academic climate, and academic outcomes.

The creation of ongoing monitoring system for each school also raises potential obstacles and challenges that still need to be addressed and resolved by policy makers and researchers. For example, now that data are linked to each school, there is a greater sensitivity surrounding potential stigmatic data. How should the state or policy makers handle schools that do not look safe? How should the data be shared with the public so they would be used constructively? To what extent should student identifying information be used to link between academic and school safety and climate data? Should individual identifiers be used to track students over time? These questions reflect the challenges that the new monitoring system generates, and are currently being debated publicly in Israel.

Additionally, *RAMA* is taking governmental responsibility to conduct periodic national level studies to monitor school violence. These studies utilize more detailed instruments than the ones that can be used in the *Meytzav*, and employ large and representative samples of schools. This long term monitoring provides nationally representative longitudinal view of school violence in Israel beginning with our first study in 1999. These scientific studies allow for more questions to be asked and to explore areas of school safety and climate that are not covered in the *Meytzav*.

These developments in Israel have important implications for other countries about adopting monitoring systems for their schools. For instance, discussions are occurring currently in the USA surrounding the inclusion of national school climate measurement that will be introduced with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Lessons learned from the Israeli combination of social climate and academics at the regional, local, and national levels could be informative.

The multi-level monitoring provided by both the *Meytzav* and the National Study create unique opportunities to integrate school climate with the academic mission of schools. The act of combining both measures may actually change the way educators see the mission of schooling. It may create a situation where educators view the creation of a positive school climate as a necessary but not sufficient precursor to academic outcomes. Furthermore, it may prompt educators in Israel to give equal value to the important individual and group benefits of positive and safe social-emotional environment and academic outcomes.

The ongoing monitoring of the social climate on all levels may therefore have immediate implications for school reform and improvement efforts. Issues and challenges identified by ongoing monitoring on all levels can contribute to formulation of policy, practice, and theory that will help drive the development of new means to improve both safe and positive climate and academic achievements.

These developments tie in with current emphasis on evidence based practice and policy. In the future, such system-wide monitoring systems can be also be used to track the success or failure of adopted evidence based programs or of promising practices that have not yet been validated (Astor, Guerra, & Van Acker, 2010). Furthermore, ongoing long term monitoring of all schools may help identify best practices. The extensive databases that integrate information of students' background, school climate, safety, and academic achievement over time can help to find schools that have overcome challenges and made outstanding progress. Such schools can serve as consultants to other schools and the focus of studies aiming to understand what worked in order to develop theories and practices.

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Table 1

Sample Sizes of Three Waves of the National Study of School Violence

Year	Schools	Students	Principals	Homeroom Teachers
1998	232	15,916	-	-
1999	239	16,414	197	1,506
2002	410	21,577	295	595
2005	552	27316	420	1861

Table 2

Summary of Implications for Practice and Research

Effective national monitoring systems include:

1. Representative stratified sample by school level and major ethnic/social groups.

2. Nested designs of "students within schools" that include data on school, family, neighborhood, and culture surrounding the school.

3. Multiple perspectives of students, teachers, and principals in the same schools.

4. Rich, agreed-upon instruments that include:

    (a) a wide array of behaviors and victimization types both by peers and by staff;

    (b) indicators of school climate, school organization and peer group dynamics;

    (c) items that are pertinent to policymakers and district level policy.

5. A strong emphasis on providing feedback to all constituents, including the general public, based on empirical findings.

6. Research geared at solving theoretical problems targeting cultural issues and violence that may not have immediate practical outcomes but build knowledge of how school victimization patterns relate to each other. In the long run, this may enhance the quality of both theory and practice.

7. A monitoring perspective to conduct studies repeatedly to inform policy and practice.

8. Monitoring should be conducted on the national, regional and school site level.

9. Monitoring systems that combine academic and climate data should be developed.