School Violence in an International Context
A Call for Global Collaboration in Research and Prevention

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SCHOOL VIOLENCE AS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

The Fourth International Conference on School Violence and the newly created International Journal of School Violence are the most recent reminders that school violence is a global phenomenon. Time and again the public in countries with cultures as diverse as Japan and Jordan, Finland, Brazil, Norway, Israel, Malaysia, Columbia, South Africa, USA and Ethiopia are alarmed by atrocious acts of senseless violence in schools. In a recent tragic incident in Finland a masked gunman opened fire at his trade school in Finland, killing 10 people and burning some of their bodies before fatally shooting himself in the head. This is an almost exact replication of a previous incident in Finland less than a year earlier that left 11 casualties. Both shooters posted violent clips on YouTube that were seen by many thousands of young viewers around the world. Both were fascinated by the 1999 Columbine school shootings in Colorado, in a little town thousand of miles away. With today's internet, media and the globalized culture, an incident in a school in one corner of the world, can have a devastating effect on many

others across the world. The negative outcomes of sharing the bad news about violence in schools are already upon us. The question that we all need to face is- will we be able to leverage this global interdependence to learn from each other and *prevent* violence in our schools? The aim of this paper is to call for global research collaboration to create the theoretical and empirical foundation for world-wide efforts to prevent school violence.

Akiba and associates put forth a global perspective stating: 'school violence is a global phenomenon that affects one of the core institutions of modern society to some degree in virtually all nation-states' (Akiba, LeTendre, Baker, and Goesling, 2002, p. 830). While school violence is experienced and studied extensively in developed countries in Europe, USA and Australia, it is not limited to industrialized societies. Thus, according to Ohasko (1997):

'violence is occurring at a high rate in developing countries and its impact on schooling, learning and living is certainly serious, which refutes the commonly-held view that violence is primarily an issue of industrialized countries' (Ohasko, 1997, p. 7).

A review of reports from across the world strongly suggests that this issue is of real concern in diverse settings across the world. In the IV World Conference on School Violence presenters came from more than 50 countries from almost all continents and described phenomena that were at the same time very similar and uniquely tied to their specific context. Indeed, as we travel around the world, observe schools and talk with students and staff and as readers of numerous reports on school violence from across the globe we are struck by contradictions. On one hand, there is a significant degree of similarity surrounding school safety in diverse places in the world. At the same time, it is surprising how different, varied, and unique school violence narratives can be within each of these nations and cultures. A cross-national examination can contribute to an understanding of what school violence variables are unique to each culture and what variables are shared by many. Explicating similarities and differences between and within countries would greatly inform theory, public policy, and interventions. Empirical work conducted across different countries can serve as the foundation for major international collaborative efforts to promote worldwide safety in schools.

In this paper we discuss the potential contributions of international and cross-cultural perspectives. We list a range of questions and issues that should be addressed by international studies. We then propose an international collaborative study of school violence across the world that can address these issues. Finally we make recommendations for a conceptual and methodological framework to design an international monitoring system for school violence.

This paper is based on our analyses of numerous empirical studies and publications that examine school violence in a wide range of countries (e.g., Akibba et al., 2002; Currie, Roberts, Morgan, Smith, Settertobulte, Samdal, and Rasmussen, 2004; De Miranda, De Miranda, Ferriani and Zito, 2007**;** Esla, Menesini, Morita, O'Moore, Moea-Merchan, Pereira and Smith, 2003; Smith, 2003; Smith, Cowie, Olafsson and Liefooghe, 2002; Oahsko, 1997; Smith, Morita, Junger-Tas, Olweus, Catalano and Slee, 1999). The conclusions we reach are based on research reports related to more than 60 countries across the world. It is also greatly influenced from the many papers from multiple places in the world that were presented in the most recent world conference on school violence.

While comprehensive, our review is far from exhaustive. We face many of the same difficulties shared by scholars who attempt to get a truly comprehensive view of the global diversity. Many programs and interventions are published and discussed in languages other than English. Unfortunately, we were limited to English language publications. Although we were able to review edited volumes reporting in English about numerous non-English speaking countries (e.g., Smith, 2003), we realized that we have very little direct access to multiple original studies cited in these volumes. In addition to reviews of studies indexed in major scientific indexes (such as Web of Science and PsychInfo), we tried to complement our review by using the Internet. This added quite significantly to our review because we were able to locate many reports on countries that were never published in English language academic journals. In some instances we utilized the automatic translation facilities available on the internet.

This review is also limited by the extent of information provided by reports from various countries. We found that one of the most challenging aspects of cross national comparisons is the fact that reports often do not provide detailed information about the methods and instruments used to obtain the figures being reported. Except for reports in academic journals and of bodies such as the World Health Organization, the details about surveys are quite sporadic and it is quite difficult to gauge the methodological rigor of the studies, how representative are the samples, what were the instruments used, etc.

Why an international and cross-cultural perspective?

Raising awareness and establishing priorities.

One of the important functions of examining school violence in different countries is to allow cross-country comparisons. Such comparative data could be used to gain a perspective on how extreme the school safety situation is in a given country, and in which countries the situation is less severe than others. This greatly facilitates policy creation surrounding school violence in specific counties. For instance, in Israel, the findings of comparative international studies have been used to dramatize the situation. Thus, in the wake of a series of reports on youth violence, the front page of the largest daily newspaper presented a chart derived from an international study (TIMMS) depicting the Israeli students as victims of high levels of bullying compared with the rest of the world. This greater awareness helped mobilize the government, teacher organizations, and select governing committees to create policy, training and interventions designed to reduce Israel's prevalence rates. Using the same TIMMS data, on the other side of the ocean, Akiba and associates (2002) made the argument to the USA educational research audience and the American public that many other countries are experiencing either similar or higher levels of school violence than the USA. This kind of global contextualization helps countries situate their standings independent of media stories associated with school violence.

Such comparisons may also have a strong impact on the public within countries. For instance, Menesini and Modiano (2003) report that comparative research showed that school violence in Italy was reported at a higher level than that which had been found in other European and Western countries (being about as twice as high as in England and almost three times higher than in Norway). The authors claim that the major response of newspapers and television programs to these data brought about awareness in Italian schools. School heads and staff began to be interested in Italian based interventions and to study school safety issues in-depth. This type of narrative has been repeated in many countries across the globe when the media reports high rates of school violence compared with other countries.

Creates a global inventory of interventions and policies.

A cross-cultural perspective of school violence provides a rich source of insights about policies and interventions. Currently we do not have a comprehensive view of the range of interventions available. Understanding

why certain interventions exist in some cultures and not others would be very helpful for understanding the cultural dynamics surrounding school violence. Using reports in research publications, it appears that mediation programs are mentioned in almost every national report we reviewed. By contrast, Olweus' and Smith's anti-bullying programs are more common in Europe, USA, and in Australia, whereas programs of restorative justice are more common in Australia and New Zealand. Zero-tolerance policies and the use of electronic security (i.e., video cameras, sensors), metal detectors, and professional guards are more common in the USA. Even so, in this global era of communications, numerous international conferences, and the reliance on empirical evaluations, almost all the school safety interventions listed above are present in multiple countries. Still, an inventory of interventions used in each country and information on their success would be helpful in understanding the spread and adoption of certain interventions across the globe and in identifying which interventions may be more effective in some countries and not in others.

INCREASES CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY.

An international perspective can contribute significantly to theories of school violence. On the most basic level, theories advanced to explain school violence in one culture can inform and stimulate comparative research in other countries. For instance, Yoneyama and Naito (2003) advance the theory on factors contributing to bullying by examining the Japanese literature on school factors that contribute to *ijime*. Their analysis connects between aspects of the role and structure of the Japanese educational system and characteristics of bullying behavior. They see a relationship between the class as a social group and the fact that most bullying behavior is carried out by a group of classmates against individual students. Also, they analyze the role expectations of Japanese teachers and show how teacher-student practices contribute to both teacher and students bullying behaviors. Akiba's qualitative analysis of Ijime in Japan's middle schools (2005) connects this set of behaviors not only to the breakdown of control mechanisms in classrooms but also to the lack of trusting relationships among classmates.

Such hypotheses and theoretical propositions advanced in the Japanese context should inform and enrich theory development in other countries that differ in specific characteristics of the educational system. For instance, one would expect to find different patterns of bullying (i.e., more individuals bullying other individuals, than group bullying) in educational systems that emphasize more individualistic ethos rather than the collectivistic ethos of the Japanese system. One would further hypothesize that cultures that enjoy more trusting relationships among peers, or stronger social controls would experience less Ijime-like phenomena.

Akiba and colleagues (2002) utilized international survey data (TIMMS) on student victimization in 37 countries to test several theoretical assumptions. They explored various theoretically driven predictors of student victimization in these countries. They tested two sets of nation-level variables – a. known predictors of crime in general (both general and juvenile) and b. factors related to the educational system itself. Their work shows that factors inherit in the educational system (e.g., academic achievements) are better predictors of school violence than predictors of general crime, basic national economic conditions, and demographic characteristics.

Akiba et al. (2002) note that certain kinds of school victimization (e.g., sexual assaults) are related to community crime levels more than other kinds. This pattern was also found in a study in Israel (Khouri-Kassabri, Benbenishty, Astor, and Zeira, 2004) in which severe types of school victimization were related to poor neighborhoods much more than mild/moderate types of victimization. Such findings and more extensive testing in other countries may help refine a theory on the 'spill over' of political and community violence into schools (Benbenishty and Astor, 2005). These kinds of cross cultural empirical findings advance existing theories on the relationships between victimization and structural factors associated with the school and its environment

THEORETICAL ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED BY A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELATIVE INFLUENCES OF THE SCHOOL, FAMILY, NEIGHBORHOOD AND CULTURAL CONTEXT IN SCHOOL VIOLENCE

An international system will help both theoretically and practically the role of these nested contexts. In recent years there are many calls urging scholars to move from a focus on individual characteristics of victims and bullies to an understanding of how contexts, both within and outside school, impact school violence (e.g., Akiba et al., 2002; Benbenishty and Astor, 2005; Furlong and Morrison, 2000; Yoneyama and Naito, 2003).

Benbenishty and Astor (2005) developed a heuristic model that presents school violence within nested contexts. Our model is highly influenced by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological developmental theory that conceives of violence as interplay among several relevant subsystems. Goldstein (1994) describes this type of nested ecological theory as an interactionist theory. This genre of theories considers human behavior as a "duet" between the

person's personal traits and contextual and environmental variables (social and physical). This environment might include other human beings that are involved in the situation in which the behavior occurs (such as other students, teachers), and also includes the physical environment (such as school and class size, school structure). Figure 1 is a visual depiction of our heuristic theoretical model that places the school context in the center of the model.
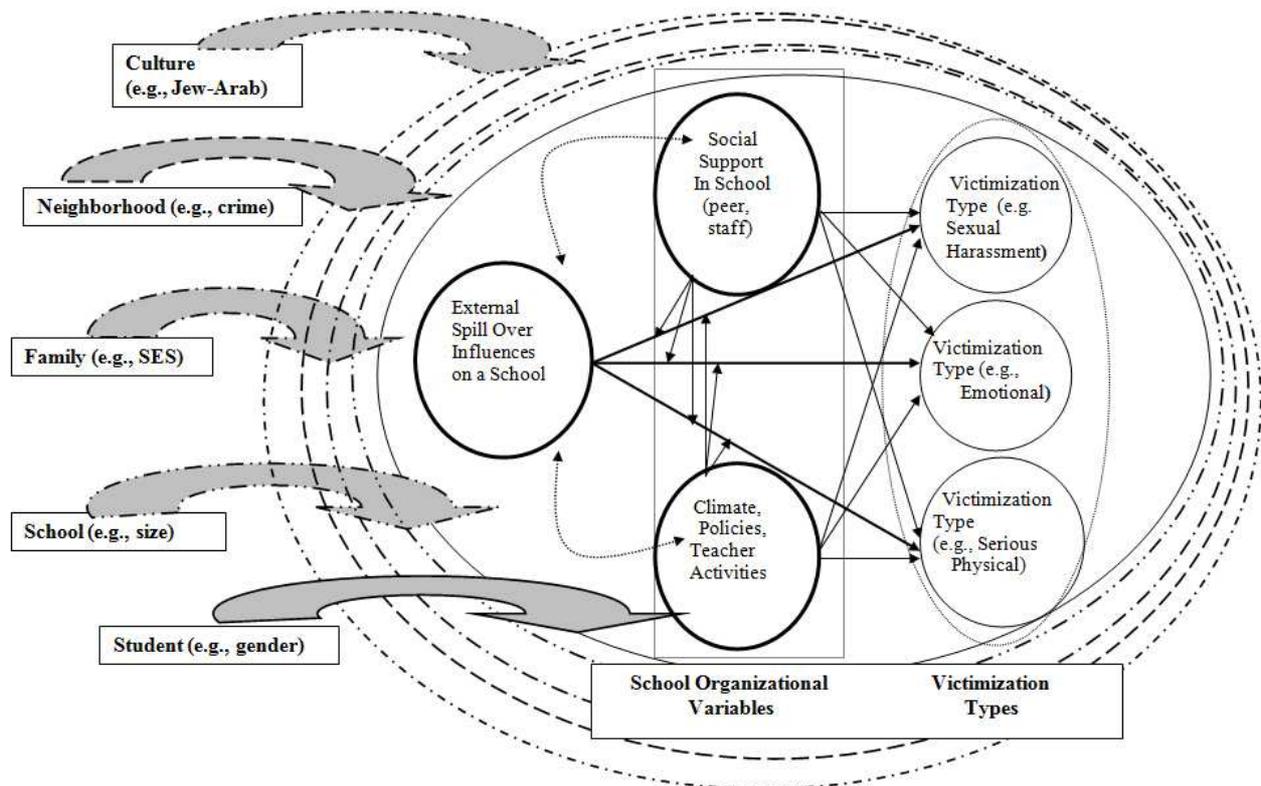

Figure 1: A Model of Social-Ecological Influences on Student Victimization

This ecological approach examines how external contexts in which a school is embedded interact with internal school and student characteristics to influence levels of victimization in schools. These layered and nested contexts include the school (e.g., structural characteristics, social climate and policies against violence), the neighborhood (e.g., poverty, social organization, crime), the students' families (e.g., education, family structure), cultural aspects of student and teacher population (e.g., religion, ethnic affiliation), and the economic, social and political makeup of the country as a whole (see for example: Astor, Benbenishty, Vinokur, and Zeira, 2006; Astor, Benbenishty, Zeira, and Vinokur, 2002; Benbenishty, Astor, Zeira, and Vinokur, 2002; Khoury-Kassabri, Benbenishty, Astor, and Zeira, 2004).

The issue of social and physical context is relevant to international perspective for several important reasons. First, it is essential to view results

of comparisons among cultures with an understanding the circumstances that lead to differences, so that popularly intuitive and often misleading interpretations can be avoided. Within the popular media there is frequently a tendency to attribute findings related to violence in certain countries and cultures to a) a 'national character' b) a 'cultural acceptance of violence' or c) to other simplistic uni-dimensional causal explanations (i.e., religious affiliations, racial compositions, educational attainment). Attention to the role of multi-dimensional contexts is not only a better scientific practice, but is also more ethical. Very often, explanations that focus on one salient characteristic tend to be stereotypic and demeaning.

To illustrate, in our National Study of School Violence in Israel we compared religious and nonreligious Jewish students, Arab and Bedouin students. This could be socially, politically and ethically very dangerous. On the other hand, without accurate data, interventions and the scope of the problem were based on stereotypes and news media reports, which tended to be extremely sensational and had no representational validity. Still, we were unsure if the Israeli public was ready to objectively interpret any statistics regarding group differences. We were fearful that segments of the Israel public would interpret results as supporting their pre-conceived ideas and stereotypes concerning which cultures are more violent. Therefore, in our analyses and interpretation it was very important to examine group differences together with the socio-economic contexts in which these groups are being educated.

With these ethical considerations in mind, in a study of staff victimization of students we carefully examined the role of ethnic/cultural affiliation and socio-economic status of the students' families (Benbenishty, Astor, Zeira and Khoury-Kassabri, 2002; Khoury-Kassabri, Astor, and Benbenishty, 2008). On this issue we have found that socio economic status is far more important than cultural practices. We were also able to show that lower levels of school violence among religious Jewish junior high schools, were not associated with the "religious education of students" but with the fact that Jewish religious schools are separated by gender. Thus, whereas all-girls religious junior high schools were low in school violence, the males in all-boys religious schools were considerably more violent than males in the secular mixed-gender Jewish schools. This kind of finding has policy implication but also helps in better understanding how social hierarchy, patriarchy, and more traditional religious societies interact with school, community, and family variables. This could have profound implications for some of our school violence theories.

A deeper theoretical understanding of history, oppression, social hierarchy and prejudice as variables connected with school violence.

Quite often, factors such as minority status, ethnic and cultural affiliation are strongly correlated within a given society with other important factors, especially poverty, education, deprivation and oppression. These high inter-correlations limit our ability to isolate and assess the independent role that each of these conceptually different factors play. However, the same ethnic or cultural group that is associated with poverty and crime in one country may have a different status in another location (e.g., Jewish youth when compared in the USA vs. Israel or other countries, or with "Asian" / "Hispanic" youth from various countries/ regions). A careful comparisons of such groups embedded in different social contexts may help sort out and isolate the relative role of different aspects of group membership. For instance, immigrant and minority groups that are associated with economic and social marginality in one educational system may be the majority population in their native country. Comparing levels and characteristics of school violence within cultural groups that have different socio-political circumstances will likely contribute to our understanding of the relative role of each context factor. One way to do this is to increase the number of within-group studies. For example, if samples are stratified by economic levels, educational levels, and perhaps region, our theories and interventions would have more information on differences within cultures based on these characteristics.

There is evidence that there may be huge structural and organizational differences between schools in different countries (see Currie et al., 2004). As an example, Smith's (2003) compendium of school violence in 24 European countries revealed major differences in the age levels students begin schooling and the actual the structure of the education system by student age and by school types (i.e., elementary, middle school and high school). Whereas in Italy there are three age sectors (6-11; 11-14 ;15-19) in Ireland there are only two (4-11; 12-18). In some countries students begin schooling at very young age while in other countries they enter a formal educational setting significantly later (Benbenishty and Astor, 2003). Similarly, we noted that in some European countries the percentage of 'repeaters' (term used in Europe for children "held back a grade") differ widely among countries in Europe. The informative UNESCO publications (e.g., UNESCO, 2004) provide educational statistics on countries around the world. These statistics reveal even greater unexplored variations among educational systems of many countries in the world.

Such structural differences between countries are likely to have far reaching consequences on the levels and characteristics of school violence.

One would expect that having children that range widely in age in the same building (such as a K-8 school) might influence age-related patterns of bullying and victimization. The large presence of students in class that are 'repeaters' (and sometimes more than once) due to academic failure, who are older may have a crucial impact on how safe other students feel. A cross-national perspective brings attention to such factors that are mostly hidden from awareness when studies are done within a single national education system.

CLARIFYING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF AGE, GENDER, CONTEXT AND CULTURE.

Smith, Madsen and moody (1999) review the literature on bullying and show that there is a clear decline in victimization, as students grow older. These findings were replicated in many studies carried out in Western countries (Craig and Harel, 2004). Still, the question remains whether this pattern is true in other parts of the world. The volume edited by Ohaska (1997) provides some indications that in countries such as Ethiopia and Malaysia this age pattern replicated in many European and Anglo countries may not hold in other cultures. Perhaps in countries where the culture emphasizes the importance of seniority and age, older students are more involved in bullying their younger peers. According to the accounts of Ohaska, this kind of behavior is accepted by school authorities that view this form of bullying as normative. However, we caution the reader to make national or cultural interpretations without a convergence of data that is both representative and qualitative data that helps interpret that data. Hypotheses about different national norms in non European and Anglo/ English speaking cultures should be tested in future international research.

International studies may also shed new light on the relationships between gender and school violence. Currently there is wide consensus that males are both perpetrating physical violence in school and victimized by it more than females. Findings from several European countries regarding gender differences related to relational and indirect violence seem to be less consistent (see a recent reviews and studies by Attar-Schwartz and Khoury-Kassabri, in press; Currie et al., 2004; Osterman, Bjorkvist, Lagerspetz, Kaukiainen, Landau, Fraczek, and Caprara, 1998; Salmivalli and Kaukiainen, 2004; Tapper and Boulton, 2004). For instance, Craig and Harel (2004) note that whereas males tend to bully others more than females in most counties surveyed in the HBSC study (Curry et al, 2004), gender differences in victimization to bullying are far less consistent. The picture is even more complicated with regard to the interaction between age and gender. Benbenishty and Astor (2005) report that the gap between victimization rates of males and females grow with age, Craig and Harel (2004) conclude that in

most of the 24 countries surveyed in the HBSC study the trend was in the opposite direction and gender gaps were smaller among older students.

The literature on gendered violence from other parts of the world raise many questions as to whether this gender pattern is global or perhaps, it may reflect societal norms that vary across the world. For instance, Trefe and Mangidtu (1997) report that in their studies of school violence in some schools in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia female students were victims of extensive violence in school. They report that 72% of their respondents agreed that girls were the main victims. Victimization of female students ranged from attempted rape and intimidation to snatching of minor property. We suspect that gender differences may be more a function of education, modernity, and economics than cultural variables alone. This means that there may be more gender similarities across similarly developed countries.

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DIFFERENT FORMS OF VIOLENCE: RANKINGS AND LINEARITY.

We advance a theoretical proposition (Benbenishty and Astor, 2005) which suggests that base rates of victimization may differ across groups (genders, cultures, nations), while the rank order of the frequency of these behaviors is rather stable across groups and reflect mainly the continuum of potential harm. Comparison among groups in Israel and in the US found support for this proposition. The authors suggested that dissimilarities in rank order to frequency of victimization acts may provide important clues as to how cultural and gender factors may be operating differently in various contexts. Further international comparisons may help assess to what extent this proposition could be confirmed and generalized.

Comparisons across the globe can also help test the underlying theoretical assumption that the relationships between context characteristics and school violence are linear. That is, for instance, the assumption, that the more crime ridden, poor and disorganized the community the higher the levels of violence in the neighborhood schools. Hence, Akiba et al. (2002), examined the linear correlations between national gross domestic product per capita, national rates of assault on women and national levels of victimization.

We think that perhaps these relationships may not be linear. We read some very scary reports (mainly from developing countries) that describe extreme situations that are not familiar to most of us. We believe that these reports describe situations that are qualitatively different than the ones usually studied in places like Europe, the US and Australia. It is possible that within a certain range of variation there is no relationship between certain context characteristics and school violence. However, when the circumstances are

extreme and *cross* a certain threshold then they may have strong impact on school violence. Hence, for instance, a certain range of deprivation, inequality, and marginality of the school community may not have strong influence on certain types of school violence, but when there is a complete breakdown of the community and students' families, the school is devastated by these outside circumstances and violence is rampant.

CAREFUL EXPLORATIONS OF WITHIN COUNTRY VARIABILITY BETWEEN DIFFERENT GROUPS

The few international studies that compared directly between levels of school violence in different countries such as the World Health Organization Health Behavior in School-aged Children (HBSC, e.g., Currie et al., 2004) focused on comparing whole countries. This approach, however, overlooks important variability within the participating countries. There is much to be learned on the factors that are associated with variance among schools within the same country; this is lost when data are aggregated across a whole country. One of the interesting questions that should be addressed is how different are countries in their variability in levels of school violence. Why are certain countries more homogenous in levels of school violence whereas others are much more heterogeneous? Is this phenomenon related to measures of inequality in these countries? Furthermore, it is possible that certain groups of schools in different countries have much more in common than they have with other schools in their own country? For instance, private or parochial schools in different countries may be more similar to each other than they resemble public schools in their own country. These kinds of cross cultural empirical findings advance existing theories on the relationships between victimization and structural factors associated with the school and its environment.

OUR PROPOSAL: A WORLD WIDE ONGOING STUDY OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Based on our reading of reports on school violence from across the world and the above analysis we recommend a proactive research agenda for international perspective on school violence. We therefore suggest a worldwide study to monitor school violence. Such a study will follow examples of international studies on academic achievements (e.g., TIMMS) and health behaviors (HBSC) and will utilize standardized measures and methods to serve as a platform for global learning and monitoring of school violence over time. International studies such HBSC, TIMMS and the Global Health School Survey (http://www.cdc.gov/GSHS/) address school violence in very limited

and partial ways. In contrast, the proposed international collaboration will have as its s main focus violence in the context of schools.

In the following sections we briefly outline the major distinguishing characteristics of the proposed international research partnership to study and prevent school violence.

A MONITORING PERSPECTIVE

We suggest that the backbone of this research partnership will be international monitoring of school violence. Monitoring school violence in each partner country over time employing shared instruments can provide answers to many of the questions we raised above. Monitoring will provide important information to each of the participating countries, as well as a shared data base to facilitate comparisons. Furthermore, we would like to suggest that systematic monitoring of school violence become an important element within the educational systems of each of the partner countries. Benbenishty and Astor developed a comprehensive methodological and technological framework that can underlie monitoring school violence (Astor, Benbenishty, Marachi, and Meyer, 2006; Benbenishty, Astor and Zeira, 2003; Benbenishty and Astor, 2007). According to this approach, monitoring can be conducted on multiple levels- school, district, nation, international, and the insights from all levels can be integrated and support prevention efforts. Thus, an international study can serve as a major impetus to develop monitoring systems in many countries, making direct contributions to the efforts of schools and countries to prevent school violence on the basis of local data.

A CONCRETE, INCLUSIVE AND COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO SCHOOL VIOLENCE

International studies of school violence face basic issues of definitions and connotations. There are multiple definitions of school violence that may have diverse connotations in different countries. For instance, Benbenishty and Astor (2003, 2005) have shown the difficulties associated with the term 'Bullying' that is understood differently in various countries. For instance, both *'Biryonoot'* in Israel and *'Ijime'* in Japan are considered bullying. However, in these countries the local terms have very different interpretations, connotations and associations (see an important discussion in Smorti, Menesini and Smith, 2003; Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, and Liefooghe, 2002).

We propose as an alternative to create instruments that highlight very specific behaviors and refrain as much as possible from using abstract labels (such as bully) that may have different meanings and connotations in

different countries. Hence, asking students whether larger or stronger students pushed them is probably understood more similarly across cultures than the question whether they were bullied. The work by Furlong and associates (e.g., Furlong, Chung, Bates, and Morrison, 1995; Furlong, Greif, Bates, Whipple, Jimenez, and Morrison, 2005) provides a good example of the suggested approach. When we designed our first National Study of School Violence in Israel we chose to use this instrument because we thought that cross national comparisons would be much more meaningful than if we had decided to use the term bullying. Indeed, translating the specific and concrete behaviors in the instrument and the comparisons with available US data were quite straightforward (Benbenishty and Astor, 2005).

What types of violent behaviors should be included in such a shared instrument? We propose to be as inclusive and as comprehensive as possible. The scientific literature indicates strongly that school violence has many forms and types, each with different frequencies and different patterns of association with student characteristics, such as gender and age, and with school context variables, such as poverty in the school neighborhood. We suggest, therefore, that school violence studies examine the prevalence of a wide range of concrete and specific victimization types. These should include at least the following groups of behaviors:

- **Verbal**, such as calling names, racial slurs, and cursing;

- **Social**, such as isolating a student or a group of students;

- **Indirect violence**, including media-related victimization (e.g., showing private pictures over the internet and spreading rumors through cell phones);

- **Physical**, both moderate physical violence, such as pushing and shoving, and more severe types of physical violence such as serious beating;

- **Property related**, including vandalism, theft, and damages to students and srtaff property;

- **Sexual**, including verbal harassment and physical forms of unwanted sexual behaviors;

- **Weapon-related,** including the possession and use of a range of weapons, such as pocket knives and guns

All these multiple forms of school violence may be important and relevant in many international contexts. Nevertheless, any such collaborative effort should take into account the idiosyncrasies of the participating countries. In some places certain types of victimization may be of special interest, whereas

in other countries they would be considered marginal and trivial. It is therefore important to identify 'a shared core' that will be used by all participants, and will allow cross national comparisons, and 'optional sets', that will contain aspects that could be selected by subgroups of participant countries.

The multiple and different forms of violence identified above should be investigated as they relate to victimization and perpetration among individual students, and between student groups (e.g., between racial groups in school). Further, it should also include victimization in the context of student-staff relationships. Hence, monitoring school violence should examine whether staff are being victimized by students and whether staff are victimizing students (see, Benbenishty and Astor, 2005; Hyman, 1990; Hyman and Peron, 1998; Khoury-Kassabri, Astor, and Benbneishty, 2008; Salas, 1997; Yoneyama and Naito, 2003).

EMPLOY MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

School is a complex human organization that brings together several interacting groups- students, teachers, other staff (e.g., secretaries, guards), principal, parents and other relevant constituents in the community. Each of these groups may have a unique perspective on what is happening in the school, including how violent it is. Each of these perspectives has its own merits and importance and should not be overlooked in monitoring school violence (e.g., Marachi, Astor and Benbenishty, 2007a; 2007b; Zeira, Astor, and Benbenishty, 2004).

Furthermore, the similarities and differences between these perspectives may add important insights on schools and the national educational systems. Major differences in perceptions may be quite informative regarding awareness of the issues and degree of consensus in addressing them. When students report that they are being victimized and experience fear in school, but the educational establishment claims that 'there is no violence in our schools', one can expect that little would be done to change the situation. For instance, Benbenishty and Astor (2005) found that the discrepancies between the views of students, teachers and principals were the largest in schools that had higher student reports of victimization.

INCLUDE CONTEXT IN DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Theory and research emphasize the role of context in school violence. Context is even more important as one moves from small homogenous environments to the more global international arena. Hence, it is important

that awareness of context should underlie the proposed international study. We suggest that this awareness be evident in several ways.

Design: The design should include multiple units of analyses, nested hierarchically: Students within classes within schools within district within a country. Such a design allows for the identification of the roles of the various contexts on school violence.

Data collection: It is important to collect data on the various contexts that are relevant to the study. These may include a range of demographic and background information on each participant (e.g., students, staff), on classes and schools (e.g., grade level, size, ethnic mix), the students families (e.g., level of education, ethnic origin, economic status), neighborhood (e.g., crime), and the nation (e.g., GNP, ethnic mix). This information will be essential in efforts to identify the impact that various contexts have on school violence.

Analysis and interpretation: Hierarchically nested designs (e.g., students within schools) and the identification of context effects require specialized strategies in analysis, and consequently in interpretation. Thus, for instance, Hierarchical Linear Models are used to identify the independent effects of factors related to students, schools and neighborhoods and the interactions among these multiple levels. Furthermore, awareness of context is evident in interpretations of findings in terms that reflect the potential role of multiple contexts. Hence, certain patterns may reflect the role of culture, but because culture may be intimately connected with ethnic background which in turn may be strongly associated with economic status the interpretation should not be one-dimensional, focusing on one context only.

UTILIZE MULTIPLE AND MIXED METHODS

The design of international monitoring of school violence that we propose is a quantitative survey that will be carried out every two to three years by participating countries around the world. It will be based on structured questionnaires to be designed and standardized by a scientific committee. However, we strongly suggest that this quantitative survey be enriched and complemented by multiple other methods. We agree with Devine and Lawson (2003) argument that research in this area should go beyond exact measurement of reports of individual students and search for larger social factors. In order to better understand these aspects of social and cultural context it is important to expand the range of methodologies we use. In addition to quantitative studies that provide vital and representative statistical information on many aspects of the phenomenon, we need to employ sociological and ethnographic qualitative methods to help understand the ways in which the social fabric and culture of society shape school

violence. For instance, Yoniyama and Naito's sociological analysis of the Japanese schools is a prime example of how the analysis of the role of education and schools in society can help us understand and interpret quantitative data.

In depth and detailed qualitative study can help identify differences and similarities among schools and cultures. Mateo-Gelabert (2000) studied for two years the bi-directional conflict flow between the school and the neighborhood focusing on one middle school in New York City. Some of the narratives regarding issue of violence erupting over issues of territory are quite similar to stories from Malaysia (Ahmed and Salleh, 1997). Similarly, Devin and Lawson (2003) note that some of Debarbeaux' qualitative observations in France are in the same direction as their own findings in the US.

In addition to utilizing multiple methods it is also important to employ mixed designs, that is, integrate in one study more than one method. In a mixed-method design, Astor, Benbenishty, and Estrada (in press, Astor and Benbenishty, 2005) used the quantitative findings of the Israeli National School Violence Study to identify nine schools for in-depth quantitative and qualitative case studies. Their findings strongly support the advantages of a mixed method study for cross cultural comparisons. They found different patterns of interpersonal peer and staff violence in Jewish, Bedouin and Arab schools. For instance, 'violence games' that were not part of interpersonal conflict were much more frequent in Jewish schools than in other ethnic groups. In the Bedouin schools there was a unique pattern in which students tried to avoid as much as possible escalation of interpersonal conflicts in schools, so that the situation would not deteriorate into violent clashes among tribal clans. Qualitative data gathering and analyses were essential in explaining differences between cultures and should be included in international studies of school violence.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

School violence is a global phenomenon. A review of the literature from across the world and the recent World Conference show both the similarities across diverse cultures and the many different patterns that reflect the unique characteristics of each cultural and national context. This richness provides unique opportunities for comparisons and mutual learning that can expand the repertoire of interventions and help examine and develop theories of school violence. While reviews of existing studies from across the world and studies carried out in many countries around the world can be quite fruitful, there is a clear need to initiate an ongoing world-wide study of school

violence that will help compare directly between the participating countries. We propose a collaborative study that will bring together researchers and policy makers from across the glob and employ methods and instruments that will help further theory and the global efforts to reduce school violence.

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